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Special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions
18 April 2000

Strengthening international financial arrangements and addressing poverty

Note by the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 54/197, the General Assembly recommended that this meeting give priority to the consideration of the modalities to achieve a strengthened and more stable international financial system, responsive to the challenges of development, especially in the developing countries, and to the promotion of economic and social equity in the global economy. That recommendation was made within a broader development context whose overarching objective — underlined by the major United Nations conferences and related events held in the 1990s and shared by the Bretton Woods institutions — is the eradication of poverty. The present note identifies some issues within these two broad policy concerns that might be the focus of discussions at the special high-level meeting. It has been prepared by the Secretariat of the United Nations.

II. Reform of the global financial system

2. The effectiveness of the current international economic and financial system in responding to development needs and the promotion of economic and social equity is being challenged. The economic and financial liberalization and globalization of the 1990s outpaced the capacity of the institutional framework in and among nations to manage it. In particular, the financial crises of 1997-1999 underlined the need for stronger global governance of international finance and for better national financial management. However, since there is no single institution to carry out this function, the solution has been to seek a higher level of international cooperation through innovative institutional arrangements, enhanced surveillance, internationally agreed standards and codes and a strengthened commitment to multilateralism. Some issues are being addressed at the global level, others at the regional or subregional levels and others at the national level.

3. The strategy for reform of the international financial "architecture" has been to design a set of financial policy interventions that would work with market forces, that would foster competition on an increasingly level "playing field", that would be amenable to harmonization across countries, that could be applied flexibly, that would promote financial sector deepening and that would spread access to finance to more countries and potential users of funds. Within this broad framework, it has come to be recognized that countries are at different stages of financial and economic development, that policies have to be tailor-made to the prevailing conditions in a country and that

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the financial sector has inherent features that call for official oversight and intervention.

4. Policy reforms that are part of this approach have been agreed or are in an advanced stage of consideration, in particular by the Bretton Woods institutions (e.g., codes regarding transparency in macroeconomic policy-making and standards for the publication of economic and financial data), the Basle Committee on Banking Supervision (e.g., reform of standards of prudential regulation of banks), and other official forums, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (e.g., the anti-bribery convention and the efforts to combat money-laundering).

5. In addition to these forums, new mechanisms for international discussion and consensus-building on international financial reform have been created. In particular, the Governments and central banks of certain countries have formed various committees and working groups, such as the Group of 20 and the Financial Stability Forum. These bodies draw their mandate and membership from a wider but nevertheless limited group of developed and emerging market countries. They represent a concrete effort to develop and broaden international consensus on policy reforms in major areas of finance, but they do not form part of existing multilateral arrangements and how well they fill the perceived gaps and respond to the challenges of stability and reform remains to be seen.

6. In September 1999, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Interim Committee was transformed into the International Monetary and Financial Committee. The reform of IMF, its surveillance role, the focus and streamlining of fund facilities and the involvement of the private sector are issues that will have been considered at the first meeting of the International Monetary and Finance Committee.

7. At its spring 2000 session at Washington, D.C., apart from addressing the issues of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and trade and development, the Development Committee will have reviewed progress in the implementation of poverty reduction strategy papers and the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative.

Questions

8. The meeting may wish to consider the following questions:

(a) What progress has been made at the first meeting of the new International Monetary and Financial Committee in the reform and governance of the international monetary and financial system? In particular, what measures are being contemplated with regard to the reform of IMF and the strengthening of its surveillance in the financial sector?

(b) In the current debate on the reform of IMF, suggestions have been made to reorient it towards short-term lending and dealing with crisis situations. What are the implications of such an approach for the stability of financial system and for the Fund's capacity to forestall crises? How would this affect the prospects of the poorer developing countries in seeking access to financial markets?

(c) The Governments participating in the new international forums have been limited to those whose economies and international financial involvement make them of systemic importance at the present time. However, smaller and poorer economies also have a stake in these discussions because, in relation to their size, they are affected greatly by the outcomes even if they do not have much impact on the system. In addition, the systemic importance of countries changes over time. How can international forums on financial issues more effectively and efficiently take into account not only the interests of smaller economies but also shifts in the relative importance of countries?

(d) One of the challenges of the recent financial crises was to seek an equitable distribution of the financial costs between the public and private sectors. What progress has been made in this area, especially by involving the private sector not only in crisis situations but drawing it in to work with the public sector to promote stability and prevent crises?

(e) Financial regulatory authorities are usually well informed about the concerns of relevant business sectors, but interactions of official circles with civil society have generally been less intense in the area of international financial policy. Increasing transparency and improved relations are seen as essential in strengthening dialogue with civil society. What measures are being taken in this regard and can they be

considered sufficient in involving civil society in a meaningful way?

III. Fighting poverty in developing countries

9. Poverty eradication has always been a primary stated goal of international cooperation for development. The fact remains, however, that poverty is not declining in most regions. The setback caused in Asian countries by the recent financial crisis highlighted the interlinkages between the financial architecture and the goal of poverty eradication. The forthcoming United Nations event on financing for development offers an opportunity to address some of these interlinkages and focus attention on the overarching objective of overcoming poverty.

10. Today, renewed attention is being given to poverty eradication, as reflected in all the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s, particularly the Copenhagen Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, in donor commitments, such as the report adopted by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD entitled "Shaping the twenty-first century: the contribution of development cooperation", and multiple resolutions and statements of intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, including the Economic and Social Council itself (see Council resolution 1999/5). One of the outcomes of these United Nations processes is that some 80 developing and transition countries have prepared national poverty reduction programmes, as called for by the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development.[1]

11. Reducing poverty has also been a primary goal of the World Bank and poverty is also increasingly becoming a focus of attention by IMF. In September 1999, IMF and the World Bank agreed to focus jointly on poverty reduction in their policy dialogues with low-income countries. This new joint approach calls for poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) as a basis for all International Development Association (IDA) and IMF lending to low-income countries. PRSPs are to be county-driven and to embody a high degree of national ownership by being developed transparently with broad participation of elected institutions, civil society and key donors, including the regional development banks and with assistance from the World Bank and IMF. The targets contained in PRSPs are being set within the broad framework of internationally agreed goals and targets. PRSPs, endorsed by the Executive Boards of both the World Bank and IMF, are required to set the basis for concessional lending by these institutions. The long experience of the United Nations system in addressing poverty in the field and intergovernmental levels could be of value to both Governments and the Bank and IMF in preparing PRSPs.

12. In addition to its poverty orientation in a framework of stronger country ownership, the new approach continues to emphasize a foundation of sound macroeconomic and structural policies. Macroeconomic policies are now expected to be developed side by side with social and sectoral programmes aimed at poverty reduction; it is also emphasized that good governance, particularly within the Government itself, has to be an integral part of a country's poverty reduction strategy. The new approach is being applied, in the first instance, to the heavily indebted poor countries as a prerequisite for enhanced debt relief.

13. In order to counter "aid fatigue" and cutbacks in budgetary resources for official development assistance (ODA), donors wish to ensure that aid is well planned, well used and achieves the desired result of reducing poverty. However, in spite of extensive measures for economic reforms by many developing countries and the reorientation of the multilateral development institutions, bilateral and multilateral official development assistance levels remain unsatisfactory. PRSPs, the enhanced HIPC initiative and the current five-year review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development provide opportunities for the poor countries themselves, the industrial countries and the multilateral development institutions to work together to mobilize the necessary level of resources and to ensure their better and more effective use to achieve poverty reduction goals.

Questions

14. The meeting may wish to consider the following questions:

(a) The financial crises of 1997-1998 highlighted both the need for more adequate social protection systems — so-called "social safety nets" — to ameliorate the poverty associated with economic

fluctuations and the need for safety nets to be in place before a problem strikes. However, safety nets are only a second best. How can the ongoing reforms of the international financial architecture take into account the need to reduce the vulnerability of the poor to financial shocks?

(b) Great attention is being paid to improving coordination of ODA programmes. How can the Comprehensive Development Framework, PRSPs and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for United Nations operational activities be used to increase the overall level and impact of resources for poverty reduction? Can a collaborative approach be developed with regard to the national poverty strategy papers prepared by Governments in response to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the PRSPs being developed with the World Bank and IMF?

(c) In September 1999, the international community agreed to accelerate the HIPC initiative through enhanced debt-relief measures as an important step towards releasing resources for poverty reduction. Several donor countries have since announced commitments of resources for the reduction of multilateral and bilateral debt and progress has been made to secure IMF funding for the programmes. What is the current situation regarding the enhanced HIPC programme, including its overall financing? How might any remaining financial shortfalls be removed?

Notes

[1] A number of developed countries have also already done so and others have indicated their intention to do so.

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Social and human rights questions: social development

2000 Report on the World Social Situation: overview

1. The *2000 Report on the World Social Situation* is the fifteenth in a series of reports on the subject dating since 1952. The main purpose of the series is to provide a succinct, periodic summary of global developments seen from a social perspective. The following paragraphs contain an overview, for the use of the Economic and Social Council, of the main trends and developments in these subject areas. The full report will be issued later in the year as a United Nations sales publication.

2. The *2000 Report* is divided into six chapters. Chapter I (Reproduction and production) reviews demographic and economic trends. In chapter II (Institutional framework), the focus of discussion is on current changes in society affecting and affected by the situation of families, social groups, civil society and a range of public institutions. In chapter III (Trends in living conditions: a mixed record of achievement), trends in living conditions and the availability of basic services are described, giving particular attention to how these differ across countries and among different social groups or income strata within countries. In chapter IV (Social pathologies), the focus is on a selected number of social problems or pathologies of special contemporary concern, including discrimination, armed conflicts, violence in various forms, corruption and crime. Chapter V (Education, technology, information: commanding aspects of social change) assesses the continued impact on societies and groups within society of developments in the triad of education, information and technology, which are assuming an ever-greater influence on the welfare of countries and social groups. In chapter VI (Old issues, new challenges: equity and ethical implications), a number of developments are identified which are expected to have a profound influence on the shape of society in the coming years and decades, radically affecting life in many dimensions in far-reaching and fundamental ways. How societies, through individual and collective efforts, both public and private, will respond to the challenges posed by these developments will also be crucial in shaping the future. The main themes and conclusions of the six chapters of the *2000 Report* are set out below.

I. Reproduction and production

3. Several demographic landmarks were reached at around the turn of the millennium, with the world's population surpassing six billion, having doubled in roughly one generation, that is since about 1960.

4. Ageing has become a global phenomenon, with the median age in sub-Saharan Africa, the subregion with the youngest population, and despite the heavy toll from human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) related deaths, rising for the first time. In developing countries as a group the median age reached 24 years, having increased five years since its low point in 1975. The

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median age in more developed countries stood at 37 years, an increase of 8 years since 1960. Globally, the population aged 80 years or older reached 70 million. In developed countries, the 60 and over age group for the first time exceeded the under 15 age group. Life expectancy at birth increased globally; the gap between the developing region and the more developed regions narrowed considerably, from 22 years in favour of the developed regions in 1960 to less than 12 in 2000. The corresponding gap in the life expectancy for women narrowed from 24 to about 14 years, and for men from 20 to about 9 years. Globally, the gender gap in life expectancy increased from 3 to 4 years in favour of women.

5. The rate of growth of world population continues to slow down and has now reached an annual rate of 1.2 per cent (1.4 per cent in developing and 0.4 per cent in more developed regions). The continuing decline in fertility is the single factor behind the slowdown. At the world level, the number of children born to each woman has fallen over a generation from just under 5 to just under 3 (from 6 to 3 in developing and from 2.7 to 1.6 in more developed regions). The number of countries with a level at or below 2.1 children per woman has reached 61, with a combined population of 2.6 billion, or 44 per cent of the global population. Many countries in Europe are about to experience decline in their populations.

6. The global distribution of population has changed markedly. Developing regions are now the home of 80 per cent of the global population, an increase from 70 per cent in 1960. Population density in these regions more than doubled in this period, from 25 to 59 persons per square kilometre (km^2), compared to an increase from 17 to 25 persons per km^2 in more developed regions. Substantial population movements have occurred both within and between countries. Urban areas now account for 48 per cent of the global population (40 per cent in developing regions) as against 34 per cent (22 per cent in developing regions) in 1960. The number of towns and cities with a population of one million or more increased from 112 to 372 in this period and those with a population of five million or more from 14 to 45. The number of people residing in countries other than the country of their birth increased from under 75 million in 1960 to some 125 million in 2000, but remained fairly constant as a proportion of the global population at about 2.2 per cent.

7. Dynamic economies capable of generating the goods and services necessary for meeting the basic needs of all people and expanding opportunities for productive work are the material base in which social progress is rooted. While an expanding economy does not itself signify social progress nor indeed an improvement in the general welfare, without such expansion little progress can be made in lifting standards of living and releasing millions of people from the daily struggle for survival.

8. The experience of recent years and indeed recent decades has been that countries with the narrowest economic base, as measured by average per capita income, have also by and large proved to be the least dynamic, with the result that an already wide gap has become a chasm between them and the economically most developed countries. At the global level, the situation at the end of the 1990s was marked by a sharp setback for the economies of developing countries (reflecting the East Asian financial crisis) followed by partial recovery; economic stagnation following a half-decade of slumping output in the countries in transition in Eastern Europe and the former USSR; and strong growth in North America, moderate growth in West Europe and near a standstill in the world's second largest economy, Japan.

9. During the decade of the 1990s taken as a whole, the economies of developing countries expanded on a per capita measure faster than in the previous decade (by 1.9 per cent as against 0.3 per cent per annum) and somewhat faster than the developed countries in the 1990s (1.5 per cent). The latter, conversely, grew faster in the 1980s (2.3 per cent) than in the 1990s (1.5 per cent), and also faster then than the developing countries. As a result, the per capita income gap between the two groups widened in the 1980s and narrowed in the 1990s. Over the period of two decades, the average income per head in developing countries as a fraction of that of developed countries fell slightly from just over one twentieth to just under one twentieth. In the same period, among developing countries per capita economic output contracted substantially in Africa and also but less markedly, in the least developed countries. In contrast, growth of output in East and South Asia, particularly in China, stayed well ahead of the growth of population, with the result that the gap in terms of per capita output between East and South Asia and that of the developed countries narrowed considerably, from about 50:1 at

the beginning of the 1980s to about 30:1 at the end of the 1990s, while the gap between the output of Africa and that of the developed countries widened dramatically, from 25:1 to 40:1. The per capita output of Africa in relation to that of East and South Asia had been better than 2:1 in favour of Africa in the early 1980s; it is now some one third below. In transition countries, per capita output also fell, by some 40 per cent, which was even faster than in Africa, but starting from a very much higher level.

10. This diversity of performance among national economies occurred in a period of profound change in the global economic environment. The world economy at the end of the 1990s was radically different from that of the early 1980s. The market model had quite clearly triumphed over the command model as the organizing principle for national economic management; economies were more open and correspondingly also more vulnerable to external shocks, especially in the case of the weakest; foreign capital flowed more freely but the flows were both geographically more concentrated (to the disadvantage of poorer economies with fewer prospects) and more volatile; the public sector receded before the private sector in an increasing number of countries, and in this context public capital flows contracted, again skewing the flow of global capital against the weaker economies. The structure of both consumption and production underwent fundamental change, with services gaining relative to agriculture and industrial production; a vast range of new products came on the market as a consequence of the exploitation of past accumulated scientific and technological innovations; methods of production underwent a revolution in key sectors, with machines replacing people, geographic relocation of production facilities and major reorganization of corporate structures and methods of management among other changes of significance. Inflation has been fought vigorously and largely brought under control in most countries, to the immediate advantage of poorer strata of the population in many instances but arguably, at the expense of overall economic growth, at least in the medium term; fiscal deficits were eliminated or substantially reduced, with gains resulting from the greater confidence of capital markets and from reduced inflation needing to be balanced against the implicit cost of reduced public services, including social programmes, as well as the direct harm to displaced public sector employees.

11. Adjustments and sacrifices have been made by countries in order to position themselves to cope more effectively with the challenges of the next century and to take advantage of new opportunities. Clearly, not all countries, and within countries not all population groups, will be successful in such an endeavour, as in the past. There is a clear danger that the experience of globalization of the early twentieth century will be repeated, when "modern" enclaves came into being all around the world integrated in a global economy, while the "back country" was left to drift outside the mainstream of "progress".

II. Institutional framework

12. The family, in various configurations, has withstood many challenges from utopian visionaries, despots and totalitarian States of various kinds. Its survival as the basic unit of socialization and provision of support and its ability to regenerate itself in new circumstances are testimony to the resilience and continued relevance in the contemporary world of this ancient institution. The impulse to form new families while divorce is on the increase and many young people in all parts of the world postpone marriage continues to be strong even as the traditional definitions of family are undergoing change. Attempts to legitimize non-traditional forms of "family" may be seen as a further acknowledgement of the importance of public commitment to the reciprocal obligations that entering a family bond implies, rather than a challenge to the idea of family. At the same time, in recent decades the family has undergone a transformation that is both rapid and profound, affecting its size and structure, the relationships among its members, and its role within the wider community and society at large.

13. The most striking change is the dramatic reduction in the size of the representative nuclear family. In the span of a single generation, the number of children in a typical family has fallen to 3 in developing and 1.6 in more developed countries, as against 6 and 2.7 a generation earlier. One consequence of such a rapid transformation is that in the future the number of close relatives in more families will fall with each generation, so that progressively fewer persons will have close living relatives. This will be further reinforced where there has been massive desertion by fathers of their families or where the incidence of single parenthood is large or where human

immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is rampant. At the same time, with life expectancy continuing to increase, there will be more three-, four-, and even five-generation families. The world has little experience of such a simultaneous rise in the number of persons living alone with no close relatives and in the number of multigenerational families, and how to cope with their varied needs.

14. The family's role as an economic unit of production has been declining, with its significance now largely confined to small-scale agriculture, trade, handicrafts and personal services, especially in developing countries. The family has remained, however, a key institutional arrangement for providing support and care to members, especially including the young and old, infirm and disabled, on a reciprocal basis, without expectation of immediate reward. While the system of support and care survives, it is in constant danger of erosion by demographic, economic and social forces. Besides the shrinking of kin-networks and the decline in the importance of family as a productive unit, greater physical distance among family members, separation of families due to armed conflict, family dissolution through abandonment and divorce, and even the eligibility criteria for assistance from government agencies are among the factors that continue to reduce the capacity of the family to offer high-quality, continuous support and care.

15. An important development in the internal dynamics of family life in recent years has been the move to recognize more explicitly and often in law the rights of individual family members. What has traditionally been the prerogative of the head of the family, typically male, in exercising control over the family, subject to only minimal legal restraint, but also to societal and moral restraint, has come more often within the purview of legal sanctions: acts of violence within the family, especially against women, are reported by victims more readily, and authorities are more willing to act on such information.

16. Women have made significant gains in terms of legal rights as well as de facto equalization of opportunities. The situation of women, in being able to exercise more fully their recognized rights, in their participation in civic and political life, and in access to education and employment, has in many instances improved, sometimes significantly. At the same time, old abuses and injustices continue, there is often outright denial of opportunities outside the confines of the family, and women in general also face various subtle forms of discrimination. Conditions vary from place to place, with sharp contrasts not only among countries but also within countries. Thus, among the poorer strata with little formal education, especially in rural areas or the slums of big cities, the situation of women is particularly burdensome and women bear the brunt of injustices and exploitation. Survival strategies, for example, discriminate against women, a case in point being the withdrawal of girls from school before boys. Incomes of women are often pitifully low; worse, such incomes are often the sole support of children, although recently in some parts of the world women have been more successful than men in obtaining paid employment. The impact of old exploitative forms of work for women is being compounded by the expansion of such activities as sex tourism and child pornography, and the trafficking in women for indentured labour or prostitution, often organized by criminal networks and increasingly international in its scope, as described more fully below.

17. A feature of the past decade has been the series of retrograde steps taken by some authorities which have set back women's situation, as conventionally judged and reinforced by a series of international instruments on the subject. These retrograde measures have typically been justified by reference to alternative, typically "traditional" interpretations of the appropriate place of women in society and of the respective roles of women and men. This provides a particularly poignant example of the difficulties encountered in trying to reconcile universal values and cultural relativity.

18. The increase in the number and proportion of women with paid employment outside the home has given women a greater sense of economic security, independence and with it a greater measure of control over their lives. At the same time, the gains have come at a price, insofar as society has been slower to adjust in what is expected of women to carry out their traditional tasks even as they take up full-time paid employment. The so-called double-burden, outside employment and continued primary responsibility for household tasks and child-rearing, remains a central feature in the lives of women in most circumstances. In assessing whether the change in the overall situation of women in the world has been for the better or worse, as in the case of many social phenomena, there is no

simple adding of pluses and minuses which will produce a clear balance sheet subject to only a single interpretation.

19. Within the family but also and especially outside the family, children and young people as a group have fared relatively badly. Child poverty has risen even in many developed countries and countries with economies in transition where it had been much reduced over previous decades as a result of both high levels of employment and social provision in terms of universal access to free basic services and various subventions to families, especially large families. In developing countries, the situation remains in many respects critical, with the incidence of poverty among children rapidly increasing. With the exception of upper- and middle-income families, children of a large family are most likely to be in poverty. Many are employed in unhealthy and demanding conditions at very low pay to supplement the family income. Globally, some 120 million children under the age of 15 are estimated to be in full-time work. Some 130 million more work part time. Others, in increasing numbers, are forced out by destitute families, are abandoned or run away from home, leading a precarious existence, often as street children.

20. The proportion of children under 15 in the total population has been falling in both the developed and developing countries but remains high in the latter group, where it is now about one third as against less than one fifth in the former. As these proportions fall further, some lessening of the pressures on the average family may be expected. At the same time, as family size and proportion of children in the total population fall, the large family will be even more closely associated with poverty. At a regional level, this can be seen in the data for Africa, which has the lowest regional per capita income as well as the highest proportion of children under 15, namely 43 per cent, and this figure is projected to decline only modestly, to 40 per cent, by 2010.

21. While poverty and lack of opportunity are and will continue to be the lot of a large, possibly major, proportion of the world's children, the standard of living and prospects for the future of others are better than ever. Contrasts within countries, most visible in developing countries but to be observed also in developed countries, will remain stark and are more likely than not to widen in the near future. Equally significant but with different implications is the gulf that is expected to widen in their prospects in developed as against developing countries.

22. Similarly, young people in the age range 15-24 are facing very different futures depending on where and into what family they were born. In developed countries, the vast majority of young persons enjoy unprecedented freedom, command over purchasing power, educational opportunities and the prospect of rewarding work; a lesser number, mainly from poorer or immigrant backgrounds or from ethnic or other discriminated against groups, face a bleaker future. In developing countries, many or most young people face a bleak future, one that can be most succinctly characterized as the mirror image of that of the majority of youth in the more developed countries. The future for African youth appears especially difficult.

23. In the developed countries, the ancient scourge of poverty in old age has been largely defeated by State-provided or assured pensions and access to free basic social and social welfare services. Alienation or loneliness, on the one hand, and periods (possibly prolonged) of physical dependence on the other, are the new problems facing older persons (and their relatives), while communities have to cope with rising costs of medical care and various other costs associated with extended life. These countries where older persons make up a much larger share of the population (currently 20 per cent and expected to increase to 26 per cent by 2020) face many new challenges, including the reform of public pension systems so that they can meet the expectations and needs of current as well as future retirees, and are appropriate and sustainable for societies facing very different economic and demographic circumstances than those pertaining when the current systems were brought into being. A different but equally important challenge is how to make use of the skills, wisdom and talents of older persons for the benefit of society at large.

24. Older persons make up a relatively modest proportion of the total population of developing countries (8 per cent 60 years and over) but their number and importance in the total is rising rapidly (in 1960, it was 6 per cent and it is expected to increase to 11 per cent by 2020). For the majority of the population of developing countries, the more important challenge is to safeguard and shore up, where possible, the family and the community, and to provide a framework for older persons to continue to play a useful and productive role in society while building a

system of income security and support for those no longer capable of independent living.

25. In both developing and developed countries, inter-generational links continue to be strong and inter-generational solidarity much in evidence. At the same time, there are signs also of potential conflict, or of the different age groups drifting apart, with as yet unforeseeable consequences.

26. Disability, while prevalent among very old persons, is also present in all age groups. Globally, the number of persons with a disability is very large, somewhere in the region of 600 million (although there is and probably never will be an agreed definition of who should be counted). In recent years, various factors have contributed to an increase in the incidence of disability, including illness, accident and armed conflict. Attitudes to persons with a disability have ranged from hostility to tolerance to compassion. Although in some quarters disability is still seen as a stigma, the more common view now is that disability is something to be coped with or to be overcome, an endeavour to be shared by the person with a disability and society at large. Accommodation to the various needs of persons with a disability is increasingly seen as an important societal value.

27. In many spheres of life, the contribution of civil society organizations has become more important in recent years, especially in developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition, where such organizations have come into being relatively recently as major new players but with their role not always clearly defined. The boundaries of civil society, often blurred, embrace activities of numerous organized as well as informal groups, united, however, by a common interest which is not adequately served by for-profit private entrepreneurial concerns or government at the local or national levels.

28. Several broad trends in the role of civil society organizations may be noted. Important traditional actors, such as trade unions, have seen a diminution of their influence, most notably in their membership worldwide. At the same time, various forms of cooperative organization have increased their membership, and the range of activities coming within their scope has similarly expanded.

29. In developing countries, many new civil society groups have come into being promoting specific causes, as well as more formally structured NGOs, inspired in some instances by the prospect of funding from abroad. A similar trend may be observed in countries in transition. Their experience in meeting the goals for which they were set up has been mixed, however. But there is no question that the importance of not-for-profit organizations of various kinds in different parts of the world is on the increase, quantitatively at least, and that the scope of their activities is expanding and membership, as already mentioned for example in the cooperative movement, growing . While globally the membership of traditional trade unions is shrinking, it is expanding in some Asian and Latin American countries, where political change combined with rapid growth in key industrial sectors have made it easier for unions to organize and attract new members.

30. In parallel with changes in civil society and the "market", important changes may be noted also in the functioning of government at various levels in many countries, in the scope of government activities, the manner in which Governments perform their basic functions and their accountability to citizens.

31. Looking at the world political map in this, the early months of the new century, it is difficult to take in the changes that have occurred in the half century or so since the founding of the United Nations. It has been a half century dominated by a process of decolonization that is probably unprecedented in modern history, coinciding with a process of nation-building or rebuilding. One consequence of both processes was to facilitate the rise of strong, centralized government and tolerance of various forms of one-party or authoritarian government, justified in the name of holding together disparate communities in new nations and mobilizing resources for the development effort.

32. The last decade has seen the end of decolonization and the democratic legitimization of regimes through multi-party elections, adherence by their Governments to international human rights instruments and other manifestations of rejection of authoritarian forms of governance. It has also seen the break-up of several major countries. A further drama has unfolded in some countries which retained their territorial integrity but experimented with various forms of devolution, including constitutional changes providing for greater regional or local autonomy, sometimes initiated in response to or to forestall secessionist movements. On a different plane, the last

decade also saw voluntary ceding of national sovereignty to supranational bodies (as in the European Union and some other regional and global cooperative arrangements), as well as new challenges to the previously taken for granted supremacy of national sovereignty, especially in the area of civil and political rights. Decentralization of administration has been another theme of significance, in line with a broader move to reduce various forms of regulation, control and bureaucratic obstacles to initiatives by citizens and corporations, a tendency, when applied to international transactions, typically described as globalization.

33. Another characteristic of the last decade has been the search for new ways in which to meet social needs, including the provision, delivery and financing of social services in countries in all regions: reform of the welfare state in developed countries, a revised social agenda following the collapse of the system of State provision in countries in transition, and a new interest in social "safety nets" in developing countries suffering economic setbacks engendered by financial volatility (as in East Asia) or undergoing fundamental structural change (as in Latin America and elsewhere), or experiencing long periods of stagnation and even economic regress (as in Africa).

34. Fundamental change in the management and direction of the economy is another salient feature of recent years, most dramatically to be seen in the total transformation of former centrally planned economies into market-oriented economies. Equally significant is the global spread of market-oriented approaches to economic policy characterized by deregulation, the reigning in of direct involvement by government in the productive process, tighter control over public spending with reduced or even eliminated public sector fiscal deficits and virtual completion of the process of privatization of publicly owned industries including basic utilities. It is not possible to foresee what the long-term impact of these vast changes will be on economic performance, let alone who the gainers and losers will be. In the short-term, however, those who bore the main burden of change have generally been those least able to do so.

35. These developments in the management of the economy are reflected in the latest trends in public finances, particularly in the level and direction of public spending and overall fiscal balances. One dominant feature of public expenditure is the wide dispersion of spending in relation to the gross domestic product (from between about 20 per cent to 50 per cent or more) in countries with similar levels of per capita income or similar structural characteristics. But spending by central government as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) continues to be much greater in the developed countries than that in developing countries, and this has not changed over recent years and indeed decades.

36. Of particular significance has been the change in the direction of public spending by purpose. In developed countries, it is noteworthy that defence spending fell as a proportion of GDP from about 4 per cent in the early 1970s to about half that, or 2 per cent, in the late 1990s. In contrast, spending on social security and welfare increased by about one half in relation to GDP, from almost 9 per cent to over 13 per cent, and on health care from two and a half per cent to three and a half per cent; education spending by central government on the other hand remained more or less constant, at about 3 per cent of GDP. In developing countries, spending on defence rose slightly in the 1970s and 1980s but fell back again to the early 1970s level of about two and a half per cent of GDP. Social security and welfare spending increased from under 2 per cent to 3 per cent, that on health care from just over 1 per cent to almost 2 per cent, while education spending remained roughly constant at around three and a half per cent of GDP. The data are for central government spending only, while in some countries, state, provincial and local governments have major responsibilities for education, health and welfare; in federal states in particular, education spending by the latter exceeds that of central government several times and health spending is also substantial. Therefore, the public spending in these areas tends to be underestimated by these figures; however, the trend over time remains instructive.

III. Trends in living conditions: a mixed record of achievement

37. Work is at the centre of the life experience of most adults and even many children. It is most people's measure of their contribution to the economy and of their claims on its output of goods and services. The nature of work people do and the value the community ascribes to it tend to determine an individual's and family's social status. As economic activity expands, economic structures become more complex and

occupational tasks more specialized, people's employment, second only to their family circumstances, shapes personal relations and offers them a defined place in the community.

38. Four areas of work are noteworthy and important changes have occurred over recent years in each: the quantity of work available, the terms on which the work is offered, the incomes or livelihoods that it provides, and the security of both the employment available and the income derived directly or indirectly from it.

39. In developed countries, the vast majority of people who work are employed for a wage or salary, self-employment having steadily fallen although it has revived somewhat in recent years. Providing an economic environment that generates all the jobs necessary to employ all those seeking work, while at the same time meeting other macro-objectives, including productivity growth and low inflation, has been a central challenge for Governments. The higher importance being now accorded to full or high levels of employment contrasts with the policy stances of the 1970s and 1980s. Unemployment in North America has fallen to about 4 per cent, while that in the European Union hovers at about 10 per cent, being particularly high in the larger economies in continental Europe. While generally lower in recent years, unemployment rates have remained mainly above levels prevailing before 1975.

40. Five trends in employment patterns and unemployment may be noted. Long-term unemployment remains a major social problem. It persists especially where entire industries which were highly concentrated in particular geographic areas have contracted, leaving unemployed large numbers of relatively immobile skilled and semi-skilled middle-aged and older workers with few alternative work opportunities. Finding work for young people without the social or work skills for entry-level jobs remains a problem despite many schemes to tackle it. Minority young males face the bleakest prospects of employment. There has been a long-standing trend towards people leaving the full-time labour force at a younger age, partly involuntarily but more often voluntarily for those who can look forward to economic security in retirement and have the skills suitable for supplementing their pension with part-time or casual work. In all countries women make up a higher proportion of the paid workforce than before; indeed, the near parity in numbers of women in the labour force in many developed countries amounts to a social revolution. Finally, where overall the unemployment level remains high, there exist nevertheless both shortages of particular skills and vacancies in types of work citizens prefer not to take up; both kinds are now more often than not filled by immigrant labour.

41. Very special circumstance face workers in the countries with economies in transition as they adjust from a regime of guaranteed employment to uncertain labour-market conditions affected by economic restructuring and privatization. Unemployment levels show a wide variation across these countries, reflecting partly the stage that respective countries have reached in carrying out economic reforms and partly different social policies aimed at easing the transition. Large-scale unemployment has been generally avoided but many workers have had their pay delayed or eaten away by inflation and job insecurity has become a new feature of life for the majority of the population, particularly for women.

42. In developing countries which have experienced rapid economic growth, employment has expanded at rates above the rate of increase in the labour force, especially in East Asia. In some, paid employment now represents an important segment of their economies. Consequently, the financial crisis in the late 1990s resulted in a heavy toll in open unemployment.

43. In Africa, where the proportion of the labour force in full time employment is low, open unemployment is typically an urban phenomenon concentrated in a limited number of population groups, such as school-leavers. At the very time when large numbers of young people were coming onto the labour market, economies were growing only slowly or even contracting. The employment situation was further aggravated by the cutbacks in public-sector employment that often accompanied stabilization and longer-term restructuring efforts. A similar phenomenon was experienced in the Latin American and Caribbean region, where there was significant open urban unemployment, coexisting with a large employed population.

44. The vast majority of workers in developing countries continue to seek a living in the many different activities that make up the informal economy, or continue to derive their living from agriculture. As a

measure of its size, in a global workforce estimated about 3 billion, between 750 million and 1 billion are estimated as underemployed, largely in the informal sector and in subsistence agriculture in developing countries.

45. The principal characteristics of such "employment" are its precarious nature, low productivity and hence very low incomes. Economic precariousness is often accompanied by harassment from extortionists and criminal gangs, as well as the authorities in many instances. A different type of precariousness has afflicted employees in countries with economies in transition, which have gone from one extreme of almost total job security to insecurity, complicated by insecurity in respect of a whole range of social benefits that had earlier been based on the workplace. Moreover, in some countries pay has become intermittent and sporadic, with wages being also often paid in kind for later barter.

46. Working conditions in countries with economies in transition continue to be poor, with a high rate of accidents and incidence of occupational health problems. A similar situation pertains in most developing countries, although efforts are being made to improve conditions, particularly in highly "visible" sectors. However, outright exploitation of workers continues to be a major issue in many countries, affecting workers in so called "sweat-shops", including young women and children, often working in the export sector and in service, who have little protection from the authorities. As long as there is a steady stream of people willing to work in poor conditions for very low pay, the prospects of those currently exploited at work are not likely to improve in the near future, although some employers have recognized that better conditions and better pay often lead to higher productivity, with gains for workers and employers. In the meantime, agitation for improved labour conditions surfaces from time to time, with a mixed record of support from authorities and limited success. Sweat-shop working conditions are also in evidence in developed countries, especially among immigrant populations, both legal and illegal; the extent of the problems appears to have increased in recent years.

47. Wage disparities, and more generally income disparities, already very large, have dramatically increased in many countries in the past decade. In many developing countries and in countries with economies in transition, wages have fallen in real terms, while in developed countries the wages of the unskilled, and in some cases also median incomes, have stagnated or crept up only slowly. Where income disparities have increased most sharply, there has been stagnation or decline in the incomes of the lower-paid (including those in the informal sector) and a simultaneous very sharp increase in the incomes of those already high up on the income scale. At the same time, insofar as the data can be relied on, there has been much reshuffling of positions in the income ranges in between the worst-off and the best-off, that is, the middle ranges, yielding a rather mixed and complicated pattern, differing from country to country, for specific local, structural as well as policy causes.

48. How incomes end up being distributed across different income recipients is a final outcome of processes that are complex, often rooted in history and the socio-political structure of a society as well as current economic, demographic and political processes; developments in other countries with which the society is bound through a web of relations also play a role. There is usually a particular, unique explanation for any country's current personal income distribution. One implication is that different policy intervention will be needed if the objective is to change that distribution in a particular direction. Another implication is that there is frequently no agreement as to the extent to which an existing distribution may be considered inequitable, and which policies might be effective and implementable to make it more equitable.

49. Data for income distribution are often unreliable — although their scope and quality has been improving — and this makes it hazardous to draw general conclusions about the direction in which distribution has been moving and the factors behind the observed (or more likely estimated or deduced) changes. Nevertheless, it is evident that in the past two decades the dominant trend has been towards greater inequality — in some cases very noticeable — but there are also contrary examples. A trend towards greater equality was observed (although based on less reliable statistics) for the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, but again there were many contrary experiences in that period.

50. The growing perception of increasing income disparities, as well as the sharp increase in the number of people in poverty, particularly in Africa, in countries with economies in transition and in Asian countries which had done well previously but regressed as a

direct result of the recent financial crisis, have prompted renewed debate about their consequences for social cohesion and stability and have in some quarters lead to a re-examination of current economic and social policy.

51. Hunger now generally goes hand in hand with poverty, lack of income to purchase food being the main cause of hunger and undernutrition or malnutrition, except where food for own consumption remains the mainstay of family food supplies, which, however, now concerns only as few as between 5 and 10 per cent of the rural population of developing countries.

52. Lack of food supplies at the global level has long ceased to be a major factor in world hunger and undernutrition. At the same time, at the local level, the use of food denial as a political weapon and crop failure due to natural and man-made disasters continue to be important causes of hunger and starvation, as are collapsed distribution systems, despite the much better preparedness and logistic capacity for intervention by national and international humanitarian or relief agencies. Such local factors have grown in importance in recent years.

53. Hunger and poverty go hand in hand also in that the calculation of poverty is statistically related to estimates of hunger. Global estimates of poverty are rooted in a calculation of the income required to purchase the food to obtain a minimum level of caloric intake, while the latter is based on surveys of actual caloric intake. The considerable discrepancy in the estimates of the number of persons worldwide in hunger (about 800 million) and the extent of global poverty (at some 1.2 billion) shows the tenuousness of the estimates. Also, as such estimates are made only at intervals of several years and the methodology changes in the interval, it is not surprising that there can be and often is much disagreement as to the direction in which global hunger (and poverty) are moving, and whether indeed there is progress or regress in coping with this entrenched problem.

54. Available estimates of the extent of hunger show different trends in different regions and countries. The general trend was favourable in the Asia and Pacific region, the proportion of undernourished population declining substantially in the last two decades. Major gains were recorded also in North Africa and the Middle East, while only minor gains were recorded in sub-Saharan Africa. The Latin American and Caribbean region had a mixed record, with eight countries for which data are available making progress and a further 16 countries losing ground.

55. Insofar as there is a close relationship between the level of income and extent of hunger, growing income disparities at the country level, particularly with stagnating or declining incomes among low-income earners, disparities in nutritional levels within countries must have risen substantially; these were only partially compensated for by special programmes to provide subsidized or free food to the poor, and other special programmes to improve nutrition among children and other vulnerable groups, or segments of the population with special needs.

56. Advances in biotechnology are the most recent and potentially far-reaching but controversial — development that will help to shape the future regarding how much food will be produced, at what cost, who will produce it, and who will have access to it and on what terms and with what potential health and environmental hazards.

57. People's health status at the global level has improved as measured by such indicators as infant or under-5 mortality, maternal mortality, life expectancy and greater prevalence of longevity, but with some local and important exceptions. In sub-Saharan Africa and the countries of the former USSR, for example, the health situation has deteriorated markedly as measured on a wide range of health indicators.

58. The infant mortality rate has fallen from 26 per 1,000 to 9 per 1,000 between 1970 and 2000 in developed regions, and from 115 to 63 in developing regions (from 140 to 93 in sub-Saharan Africa); the existing gap in favour of the more developed regions thus increased still further. No developed country has an infant mortality rate now exceeding 35 per 1,000, while almost twice as many developing countries — 62 per cent — do. In the case of mortality levels for the under-5s, the comparable figures — 45 or more per 1,000 — are zero and 61 per cent. In the case of maternal mortality, 71 per cent of more developed countries and only 6 per cent of less developed countries record a ratio of less than 30. Life expectancy at birth increased from 68 years to 75 years in developed regions, and from 52 to 63 years in the less developed regions, in this case showing a clear narrowing of the gap between the two regions.

59. A number of diseases affecting large numbers of people continue to dominate the global health picture. Some diseases which had been earlier largely brought under control in many countries have seen a recent resurgence, partly due to worsening sanitary conditions, poor housing, overcrowding and inadequate diet, as well as failures in the health-care system, in preventive measures and in some instance new resistance to drugs. Malaria is a striking example of a resurgent disease, which now affects nearly 300 million people, with a death toll of more than 1 million annually, largely in sub-Saharan Africa. The incidence of this disease declined steadily in the last century, reaching its low point around 1970, since then it has risen rapidly.

60. Viewed over the long term, there has been a remarkable change in the causes of death at the global level. The leading causes of death now are cardiovascular diseases and cancer, accounting for 30 per cent and 23 per cent of mortality, respectively; at the beginning of the 1900s their combined impact was a mere 15 per cent, at a time when respiratory diseases (at 20 per cent) and other infectious diseases (at 13 per cent) were the leading causes of death.

61. The global pattern that is evolving is this: new epidemics are emerging while traditional health problems persist. Non-communicable diseases — the newer causes of death — now account for about 43 per cent of all deaths, 39 per cent in developing and as much as 81 per cent in developed countries. Within this category, neuropsychotic problems (10 per cent in developing and 23 per cent in developed countries), cardiovascular diseases (10 per cent and 18 per cent) and cancers (5 per cent and 15 per cent) are most prominent, followed by death due to injuries, caused especially by traffic accidents. At the global level, the "disease burden" on society of traffic accidents, taking into account both disablement and premature death, is calculated by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be in the region of 16 per cent of the total burden, with the burden of neuropsychotic problems, in second place, put at 10 per cent. Communicable diseases and other infections, as well as maternal and child ill-health and disability, the traditional diseases, continue to be important, especially in developing countries. Deaths from HIV/AIDS alone now account for 14 million, with currently 33 million worldwide infected with HIV. Of the 4 million premature deaths annually attributed to smoking, the vast majority occur in developing countries.

62. Developing countries are now facing an unprecedented situation: they are acquiring the diseases of the more developed countries while not having successfully contained the traditional diseases, and are thus confronted with a double challenge which most of them are not in a position to meet given the resources available and inadequacy of their health-care infrastructure.

63. The proliferation of business travel, tourism and migration, the expanding interchange of food products between countries and continents, and the increased transmission of virulent diseases such as influenza, AIDS and malaria, is creating enormous challenges for health services not only in developing but also in developed countries. The need for rapid exchange of health information and medical resources (doctors and technology) is becoming more obvious and necessary. The communications revolution at the same time provides for improved communications both within national borders and internationally with respect to epidemiological surveying, prevention, surveillance, intervention, monitoring and control of disease transmission. Effective approaches will increasingly depend on a true globalization of health in all of its multiple dimensions.

64. Just as the health gap (and even more starkly the health-care gap) between the developed and developing countries is large, health conditions within countries vary significantly among income groups and by gender. WHO estimates show that in developing countries, the ratio of the probability of dying in the age group 15-59 between poor and non-poor (as locally defined) is 2.2 for men and 4.3 for women; corresponding estimates for the 0-5 age group are 4.3 and 4.8. The incidence of tuberculosis among people in poverty is 2.6 times greater than among people not living in poverty. There are differences also in developed countries in the health status of different income and social groups. As a rule, however, with comprehensive health-care systems, rapidly rising expenditure on health care subsidized or financed from public resources and steady increase in the general level of health, differences are increasingly due to factors unconnected with differential access to health care (with the notable exception of a few of the richest countries). In developing countries, in contrast, the disparities remain very large, given the typically inadequate capacity of public systems to provide even

basic care, which has been further eroded in recent years in countries least well equipped to cope.

65. The ability to provide access to safe water, on which health (as well as productive capacity) depends, remains elusive in developing countries, with the majority of the population lacking access in about one quarter of countries. The situation is still worse in respect of adequate sanitation, with one third of developing countries unable to provide access to the majority of the population. Based on population rather than numbers of countries, 25 per cent lack access to safe water, while 50 per cent lack access to sanitation.

66. Differences in available space and quality of dwellings are probably the most dramatic manifestations of living standard disparities between the upper and lower income strata and between the average income recipients in more developed as against developing countries.

67. In the urban dichotomy of two cities, of the rich and of the poor, the gap continues to widen. Rapid urbanization and demographic changes are reshaping housing needs. While in most developed countries adequate housing is by and large available to most people, as also in countries with economies in transition but with lower average standards and quality, developing countries have not succeeded in making decent housing widely available. Overcrowding, poor quality housing and lack of adequate water and sanitation, especially in the growing number of informal settlements, predominate and pose health, safety and environmental hazards. Homelessness, endemic in developing countries and recently on the rise in developed countries, has added to social polarization and tension in urban areas.

68. The findings from the United Nations housing indicators programme confirm that countries with higher per capita income have larger and better quality of housing as well as better water and sanitation provision. For all indicators — floor area per person, persons per room, percentage of permanent structure and percentage of housing units with water connection to their plot — there is a wide gap between income groups within countries and across countries. Housing in high-income countries is also generally better built than in low-income countries. Among the lowest income groups, housing is far below standard, informal and often unauthorized.

69. Housing provides a particularly important example of market failure on a large scale through the difficulty of allocating resources in ways that meet equitably a basic social need. And yet, while some efforts to compensate for market failure by public intervention have proved successful, others have not and some have made the situation worse.

70. The basic dilemma faced by societies, now as in the past, most particularly in urban areas, is that inhabitants with different economic functions and very different earning capacity but who are nevertheless dependent on each other compete on highly unequal terms for limited space and against alternative commercial and public use. The market outcome has typically resulted in overcrowding of the poor, or their being pushed out to the peripheries of cities that require long journeys to work on inadequate public transport or use of expensive private alternatives. In developed countries, various forms of public subsidy or public housing have been attempted, often with marked success but also unforeseen difficulties over the longer run. Retreat from public support of affordable housing for the less well-off has more recently contributed to the increase in poverty and homelessness.

71. In developing countries, the rapid growth of cities has meant that the provision of adequate housing has not kept pace with the need for it. While the better-off have typically been able to secure appropriate housing, the poor have been squeezed in various ways. Those able to get a foothold in shanty towns or squatter settlements on first arrival in urban areas had to endure a precarious existence, with no security (or services) even when able to afford ad hoc improvements to the shelters they occupied. Further problems have been created when urban authorities cleared such settlements for subsequent commercial use or high-income housing.

72. A distinct feature of housing viewed from a social or equity perspective is that economic prosperity tends to have a negative impact on the housing of poor people insofar as they are forced to compete with people who can afford rising prices, as buyers or renters, crowding the poor out of affordable housing. Moreover, in all countries, mobility and flexibility in responding to new employment opportunities requires an active housing market, for rent or purchase, with a range of accommodation of different size and price to meet the various needs of individuals and families of various size and incomes. In many countries, rich and

poor, these conditions are not being met. Open and hidden discrimination when it comes to the sale, renting and allocation of public housing presents yet another formidable obstacle to millions of people, an obstacle that is often the very last to be moved aside.

IV. Social pathologies

73. At the end of the cold war, the hope of a world without wars, in which conflicts between and within nations are peacefully resolved, has not yet been realized. According to the Department of Peace ad Conflict Research of Uppsala University in Sweden, during the decade ending in 1997 there were 103 armed conflicts in 69 locations around the world, in 1998 there were 27 conflicts in 26 locations, and in 1999 there were 36 conflicts.

74. While armed conflicts have not diminished, there has been a change in their pattern, the majority of which now take place mainly within States. They are usually fought not only by regular armies but also by militias and armed civilians with little discipline. A particularly disturbing feature is the great number of children actively involved in hostilities. The fighting in most of these conflicts has tended to be intermittent with varying and fluctuating intensity. Many of the conflicts have brought about the virtual collapse of organized government, the collapse of such institutions of the State as the policy and judiciary, the breakdown of order, an increase in banditry and in many cases the destruction or looting of State assets.

75. In some armed conflicts, the use of simple, domestically produced, weapons has predominated, but mainly the combatants have been well supplied by imported arms, which seem to have been readily obtainable for hard currency or barter for local commodities.

76. The cost in terms of loss of human life and economic, political and social disintegration has been massive. In the past decade, over four million people are estimated to have been killed in the various conflicts; most were non-combatants. One million people have been victims of the 120 million landmines that were buried in over 70 countries. Other long-term effects on people have been noted: extensive emotional and psychosocial stress; mental illness; a sense of insecurity, especially for women and children; displacement and exile; and lost education opportunities.

77. Internal conflicts typically involve secessionist movements or groups seeking to gain power by military means. Another major factor underlying conflicts has been the inability of many Governments to guarantee basic order and protection to their populations and their inability to contain minor conflicts and prevent them from developing into bigger ones. Countries that have been particularly afflicted by armed conflicts typically suffer from inequality among social groups, based on such factors as ethnicity, religion, national identity or economic class, reflected in unequal access to political power that forecloses paths to peaceful change.

78. Discrimination continues to be pervasive and to take many forms. While it is often harmless, more an inconvenience than anything worse, it can and has exhibited virulent forms, effectively barring some groups from full participation in the economy and society, or compelling them to participate on unfavourable terms. Frequently, and in various ways, it has erupted into violence. The consequences have been particularly dangerous when the resulting violence is not condemned by authority or, indeed, when authority condones overt discrimination.

79. Every one discriminates and cannot avoid doing so. People favour those who meet their needs, who resemble them most, who are seen as attractive in some sense. Whoever is in power has typically defined reality, usually ascribing a higher value to his or her own attributes or characteristics and inferior or subservient status to others. In extreme cases, a polarization ensues between "us and them", with pride turning into prejudice, patriotism into chauvinism, defence into attack and violence. Group solidarity's other side is often group exclusivity. Over time, many forms of prejudice that have in the past lead to open discrimination have diminished with the general rise in education. Familiarity has tended to attenuate discrimination. But there have been many situations recently where these norms have quite clearly not operated.

80. Another newer trend to be observed is that discrimination is less likely to be supported by authorities. Few Governments now openly contest the validity of international conventions and other instruments relating to discrimination against women, older persons or ethnic, linguistic and religious groups.

Their provisions are increasingly being incorporated into national laws and more countries have in the recent past ratified the various instruments. Grievance mechanisms or redress procedures have also been put in places; in many instances, they provide a useful recourse procedure against wrongs perpetrated.

81. A related development has been the spread of awareness among groups discriminated against, their less ready acceptance of their fate and a greater capacity for organizing in defence of their cause. In some cases — for example of that of persons with a disability — a measure of success has resulted. However, in some instances, vigorous advocacy has produced counter-reactions and at times has incited greater hostility against the target groups.

82. Violence (besides that arising from armed conflict) has always been an affliction of societies and it is difficult to assess whether such violence has recently been diminishing or increasing at a global level. What is clear is that attitudes toward violence in general and toward particular forms of violence especially have been changing. There is less tolerance and acceptance of it and barriers are being erected against violence, *inter alia,* within the framework of agreed human rights.

83. The criminalization of violence, focusing first on communal forms, is being extended to the private domain, marking an important shift in where societies draw the dividing line between the private and the public domains. Thus, violence against vulnerable members of the family and women in particular has been increasingly recognized as a criminal act. At the same time, this change has varied in intensity and depth from society to society, with domestic violence still seen in some quarters as a private matter, legitimized by cultural norms.

84. Violence has been on the increase in countries that have undergone major upheavals, such as serious economic, political or social dislocations, especially when this has involved confrontation between different value systems. A strong correlation may be observed also between such factors and the increase in violence against women and various forms of domestic violence.

85. Violence against women in both the public and domestic domains persists despite important gains made by women in many spheres of life. Even in societies where domestic violence against women has been criminalized, much remains to be done before it is eradicated. Girls and young women continue to be especially vulnerable to abuse by parents, adult caregivers, acquaintances, husbands and male friends. The incidence of violence or sexual assaults against women with a disability is particularly prevalent. Rape has been increasing in many parts of the world. Violence against women also continues to be widely practised by parties to armed conflict. Migrant women are also particularly prone to violent acts. The levels of trafficking in women have reached major proportions and are currently estimated to be in the range of 1 to 2 million per year.

86. Prostitution is globally on the increase. The majority of prostitutes seem to be coerced or deceived into prostitution. A large proportion of prostitutes have themselves been subject to sexual abuse in childhood. Since prostitution, even when tolerated socially, operates largely outside the law, prostitutes continually endure physical and sexual violence and their "handlers" typically prevent those who wish to escape prostitution from being able to do so. Most prostitutes come from poor backgrounds, as many as 90 per cent in developing countries, while the financial turnover of the "sex sector" is large and growing in many parts of the world.

87. Over the past decade there has been a marked increase in reported violence against children. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in the course of armed conflicts in the 1990s, up to 2 million children were killed, 6 million injured or disabled, 1 million orphaned and 15 million displaced. Sexual abuse has become widespread, with child trafficking also on the increase. The practice of selling children into servitude or prostitution continues in poor countries despite efforts to curb it. Between 15 and 30 million children live on the streets of major metropolitan areas, with their numbers growing, and face exploitation and violence at the hands of the public and in many cases even of the authorities. The increased consumption of illicit substances by children and youth, induced by adults, represents a new and growing form of violence. More than 50 million children work under hazardous conditions and are subject to physical abuse by their masters.

88. Corruption, which is age-old, has recently attracted renewed attention and has assumed a central place in the international agenda. It seems to be on the increase as a global phenomenon, although it is not easy to document this for the obvious reason that it is

not readily admitted, but also because it takes many forms and some practices which are considered corrupt in one place are not considered to be corrupt in another.

89. The new scrutiny to which corruption has recently been subjected derives from several developments. In the context of economic liberalization and increase in transborder transactions of various kinds, including financial flows, lending, trade in services and ownership, greater attention is being given to how different countries conduct their business, to their laws and regulations, accounting rules and tax codes, and to other aspects of their economic life. The clash of different business cultures and the insistence of outsiders to be assured of a "level playing field" when venturing into new markets have contributed, *inter alia*, to casting light on practices previously hidden or tacitly accepted.

90. With the new emphasis on the beneficial role of properly functioning markets for the allocation of resources and the promotion of economic efficiency and insistence on reforms to make Governments also function more effectively has come a new awareness that given the vast resources directly or indirectly controlled by public authorities, corruption which leads to the misallocation of resources represents potentially staggering losses to society.

91. There is also a new recognition of the fact that corruption typically hurts the ordinary person most, while often entrenching the already advantaged or the stronger and privileged. Seen as an important issue of equity in a world undergoing rapid change, it is also less tolerated by the public at large.

92. Organized crime has taken on monumental proportions in recent decades. Trafficking in humans, drugs and illegal firearms, as well as money-laundering, have burgeoned, creating a shadow economy that runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars. Profits from illegal trafficking in cocaine, heroin and cannabis, to cite one example, are estimated at a staggering $85 billion, while overall spending on drugs each year is estimated at $400 billion.

93. The global environment that enables the growth of legitimate multinational business and facilitates the freer movement of people, capital and goods across national borders has also provided unprecedented opportunity for criminals to organize themselves on a global scale. Traffickers of every description have benefited from the positive features of globalization, moving criminals and booty easily from country to country, stalking victims and recruits in new and ever-growing territory and investing profits in centres that offer secrecy and attractive returns. The negative aspects of globalization such as rising inequity, deepening social exclusion and marginalization of sections of poor populations have also worked to the advantage of criminals. Growing numbers of people, especially the poor and the young, in developing and developed countries alike, are becoming vulnerable to the lure of crime and the "highs" of criminal behaviour.

94. The Internet, a centre of globalization, is fast emerging as a key ally of organized crime networks. They have been able to move their money anywhere in the world with speed and ease and little danger of detection, thanks to rapid developments in financial information, technology and communication. "Megabyte money" (as symbols on a computer screen) can be moved scores of times to shake law enforcement officials off its trail. In addition, criminal organizations have been making full use of financial havens and offshore centres in the new global economy to launder their assets. Some estimates put the number of such "anonymous" corporations at more than one million worldwide, and the amount of laundered money as high as $500 billion a year.

95. The Internet is also a new tool for the old crime of trafficking in humans. The proliferation of web sites on pornography, sex predators and paedophiles, with "content" providers from around the world, attests to the transnational reach of criminal syndicates engaged in the sexual trafficking of women, girls and boys.

96. The changing nature of organized crime is providing a serious test of government and intergovernmental law enforcement agencies. Its sheer sophistication and complexity call for innovative forms of cooperation between Governments, intergovernmental agencies and non-government organizations on many levels. Above all, the explosive growth of organized crime raises fundamental questions of the role of state in ensuring social protection and human rights guarantees for the poor and marginalized.

97. While a variety of factors have contributed to the perceptible rise of organized crime worldwide, a global picture of conventional crimes (such as assault, homicide, robbery and other property offences) is harder to draw. In some developed countries, overall

trends in recorded crimes are reportedly on the increase, especially in the countries with economies in transition; in others, they are on the decline. Crime in major cities owes something to more efficient police work but also to the changing demographic profile. For the most part, first-generation immigrants — with the few exceptions who maintain criminal ties to their native countries — have tended to be law-abiding.

98. Global crime assessments have to be made with caution, bearing in mind that statistics typically reflect only crimes that are reported and therefore only a portion of actual crimes committed. Within countries, the picture may also vary considerably between rural and urban areas and major cities and depends on the development profile of each country. Other determinants also play a role, including the degree of credibility of the police and of the state as law enforcers and dispensers of justice, especially in the eyes of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations, and the willingness and ability of poor, illiterate, newly immigrant or elderly people to file complaints. These factors make straightforward comparisons within and between countries difficult. The United Nations surveys on crime trends and operations of criminal justice systems point to other problems, including differences in legal definitions of crimes and administrative procedures for counting, classification and disclosure.

V. Education, technology and information: commanding aspects of social change

99. Education has assumed a central role in the life of societies, and their general progress has become intimately bound up with the vitality and reach of the education enterprise, from the preschool to postdoctoral levels. At the global level, it has become the biggest "industry", absorbing 5 per cent of world GDP and generating or helping to generate much more.

100. The promotion of universal public education in an earlier era had as its principal aims — and these continue to be sought — nation-building and national integration, the spreading of shared values, assurances of a strong moral component, the socialization of children and the steering of young persons into assigned adult roles. What has come to the fore in recent decades and will assume still greater importance is the economic role of education, as it is increasingly the foundation of individual success and of society's prosperity. Education, in combination with research and technological innovation, is reshaping most aspects of life, and indeed is on the edge of reshaping life itself.

101. Education opens doors and facilitates social and economic mobility. But it also shuts off possibilities to the excluded and has in some circumstances played a divisive role as well between the better educated and less educated. Unequal access remains a feature of most education systems, however extensive, expressing itself in unequal duration of education for different social groups, particularly in the unequal quality of what is offered.

102. Universal primary and a high level of secondary enrolment have been achieved in most developed countries. Differences emerge in the number of pupils dropping out early or not going on to post-secondary education, and here there continues to be a relative high correspondence between low social status and early exit from the education system. While in these countries enrolment at secondary and tertiary levels has increased rapidly and Governments have made major efforts to encourage young people from less well-off homes to continue education, there remains a considerable gulf between social classes. Here, differences in quality play a critical role, with the available schooling at both primary level and secondary level typically inferior in areas serving poorer or minority populations. Parents with less education tend to give less importance to it and often pass these attitudes to their offspring. At the same time some communities, including immigrants in some instances or other minority groups, see education as their main hope of advancement and are seizing their opportunities.

103. Concern about the quality of schooling in general is common to all developed countries. This manifests itself in the frequent complaints from employers that the products of the education system are often unprepared for work; one estimate puts the resources devoted to remedial teaching and on-the-job training spent by employers at a level equal to the entire public education budget. The concern manifests itself also in frequent reference to the importance of education to maintaining a competitive edge in an increasingly knowledge-based and open world economy.

104. Both concerns have of course even greater force in most developing countries where educational opportunities are more restricted and typically more unequal and where what is available, particularly in rural areas and low-income communities, is very poor, with most school systems afflicted by overcrowding, few resources and poorly trained teachers, and further complicated by other problems of poor communities, such as children often being sick or undernourished and attending school sporadically.

105. Still, over the years, enrolment rates at the primary and even at the secondary levels have crept up toward rates prevalent in developed countries. The most glaring gap that is now emerging is between Africa and South Asia, on the one hand, and other developing regions on the other. In many developing countries, there is close to universal primary enrolment. Where the overall rate is still lagging, it is often mainly due to the very low enrolment of girls.

106. The goal of complete access for boys and girls to primary education is subscribed to by most developing countries. But the obstacles in practice to its attainment continue to be formidable. There is also a vigorous debate about the relative priority to be given to the different levels of education. The primary school and universal primary enrolment have an importance beyond mere "schooling". In the longer run and over several generations, they have demonstrated their critical importance to the transformation of societies and to what sociologists refer as the modernization process. At the same time, the more immediate economic imperatives have tended to point to the importance of expanding secondary and post-secondary education, which have indeed also been found necessary to the attainment of quality universal primary schooling. Enrolment increases at the primary level have in themselves generated pressure to expand the number of places available at higher levels; and indeed such pressure has been effective, partly by virtue of the fact that it has come from groups with more education, with a greater capacity to articulate their demands and often with better access to the authorities.

107. The school system is excellent in some developing countries and all countries have excellent schools. It is the prevalence of low standards in the bulk of the system in many countries that is troublesome and has not proved easy to remedy. While piecemeal innovations and reform may be observed throughout the various regions, education systems have been slow to change and tradition has weighed heavily. Inevitably, changes have also been slow in yielding results, and the fact that reforms, if they go wrong, cannot easily be reversed and may leave permanent damage has acted as a restraint on reform even though in many countries reform is urgently required.

108. While it is difficult to judge whether the quality of entire systems is improving or deteriorating, there is a broadly shared belief that education at the primary and often also the secondary level is not up to meeting the rapidly changing needs of most developing countries, in terms of skills taught and acquired, and preparation for work or for higher education. In some countries, conditions have certainly been deteriorating, in part because of more limited resources, although this is by no means the only or even main reason as the evidence suggests that expenditure per pupil is far from being the only important factor associated with education results obtained. Other factors have been important, social and cultural but it has proved more easy to identify poor outcomes than to explain their precise causes.

109. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative differences in educational attainment and education systems across countries, interpersonal differences within countries are large and in many developing countries arguably becoming larger. These countries will face a steadily mounting challenge by the divisions that unequal access to education will pose as educational attainment is becoming the dominant determinant of social status and economic prospects. Currently access to education offers the prospect of upward mobility to some; in this technology has made possible and is being used in some countries to provide opportunities to youth from rural or remote areas and poor families, for instance by what has come to be described as distance learning. But the more typical tendency seems to have been that the already educated and better off are able to consolidate their advantage through better access or skilful use of opportunities presented, distancing themselves further from other sections of their communities.

110. An unprecedented technological explosion of ways to communicate has resulted in many significant changes, including the lowering of production costs and productivity gains. The Internet has been instrumental in advancing the frontiers of knowledge and its effective application. From the perspective of

developing countries, the new "information revolution" represents an opportunity to access global information and knowledge and to harness them to facilitate and accelerate development.

111. In principle, the information revolution has the potential to create opportunities for both developing countries and disadvantaged and weaker sections of society everywhere to gain access to information resources that enable them to participate as players in the marketplace of the global economy. While universal and equitable access is critical in making information technologies an instrument of development, there are large disparities in access and gaps in Internet connection rates between rich and poor countries. Even among those who are getting connected to the network, the rate and quality of connection sites is uneven among and within countries.

112. As the communications revolution has increased the range of information flows and as economies are becoming increasingly dependent on knowledge and "know-how", economic growth is coming to be less constrained by physical scarcity while the control of knowledge (including access to it and the shaping of its content) is becoming less the province of elites and bureaucracies but is more widely distributed.

113. To date, the information revolution has produced inconclusive trends about the ways in which Internet usage will affect the global community and the development process in particular. At the heart of this matter is that two distinct approaches to information technology use may now be at odds with each other and compete for dominance. One is the commercialization of the Internet, buoyed by the private sector and influential actors who stand to profit from such activities, which will also contribute directly to economic growth. The other is the Internet as an instrument of social transformation. Because it is non-hierarchical and non-controlling, the Internet has shown its wide use can serve as a leveller, bringing to the table the previously excluded voices of those who may thus be fully heard and participate in the giving and receiving of knowledge. In this latter construction, the Internet would be a critical resource for thinking and knowing and a powerful tool for democratization.

114. Currently, both usages of the Internet and information technologies coexist. However, with varying rates of adoption across the world, the relative impact of the two types of usage across the range of countries is unclear at the present time. The consequences for societies due to selecting one or other of the two usages will at least partly be determined by the state of development of the countries under consideration and the relations among the actors involved within countries.

115. Information technology and associated developments have had a profound influence on how production is organized and consumer needs are met. More generally, technological innovations have been particularly important and extensive in the range of intermediate goods, materials, production processes, instrumentation, the use and application of memory chips, integrated circuits and other programmable control devices, with their attendant software. The most recent development of far-reaching significance has been the introduction of on-line dealing, electronic or so-called "e-commerce", above all in inter-company transactions.

116. In comparison with earlier periods, when an array of technology-driven new consumer items came to the market and their use spread rapidly from the better-off groups to the "man in the street", largely as a consequence of the possibility offered by mass production leading to falling prices per unit, fewer new consumer products have come on the market in recent years — although quality has been improving — and those that have are concentrated in a limited number of lines in electronics, telecommunications and products of the bio-medical and pharmaceutical industries

117. At the same time, the production of basic and common-use consumer products has been widely scattered, with a massive expansion in productive capacity in developing countries both for export and for the domestic market. The availability of household durable items, such as refrigerators, cookers, sewing machines, fans, radios, televisions, video-recorders, cameras, telephones, and personal computers, as well as bicycles, motorcycles and even private cars, has expanded several-fold in the space of some 10 years and their use is reaching further down the income scale. But while the middle-class, consumer lifestyle is now enjoyed by a greater number of people around the world, the contrast between this lifestyle and that of persons for whom it remains out of reach appears starker than ever and more clearly visible.

118. A lesson of the last decade in regard to the successful spread and application in developing

countries of "old" technologies and commercial exploitation of "new" technologies is that much more is required than "access" and a technologically literate population core. Supporting networks are also required, both technical and professional, as well as access to credit and venture capital, and support or at least acceptance of groups who might feel that their power or position is being challenged. The support of such groups, particularly elites, has been important, otherwise there has had to be a sufficient mass behind innovation to overcome vested opposition wishing to maintain the status quo. Immigrants, sometimes returning home, have in some countries been in the vanguard of successful change and entrepeneurship based on the exploitation of technological opportunities.

VI. Old issues, new challenges: equity and ethical implications

119. In chapter VI, the discussion focuses on the moral, ethical and distributive implications of five major developments: globalization and its social dimensions and equity implications; changing views on the role of government in promoting the common good; the shift from non-market to market approaches to meeting social needs; the change of boundaries between the private and public domains; and developments in the bio-medical sciences and their impact on the future shape of populations and societies. This section is more speculative than earlier sections. Questions are raised to which there may be no clear answers, at least not yet. No attempt is made to forecast what lies ahead or to lay down norms for what ought to be. Rather, questions are posed because they clearly require informed discussion, and that discussion may also help shape the future contours of the policy agenda for local, national and international action.

120. The discussion begins with a brief recapitulation of what is typically understood by "globalization". Both its quantitative and qualitative aspects are reviewed. Various aspects of globalization and their implications for the future shape of society are examined: (a) migration and travel; (b) the global reach of knowledge, technology, information, communications, mass media, and mass culture; (c) the transborder transmission and diffusion of ideas, values, norms and standards relating to both the public and the private domains; (d) the growing interdependence of the global economy by the enhanced movement of goods, services, capital, finance, expertise and labour; (e) the convergence of views on economic management, regulation and public-private relations; (f) economic groupings; (g) transnational corporations and concepts of corporate governance; and (h) transnational mechanisms of economic surveillance and management.

121. Bearing in mind the above, the following questions are raised. Do current developments lead toward greater cultural homogeneity? If so, what problems would this create? Is more homogeneity always bad? Is there a contradiction between universality (universal values) and cultural diversity? How can one arrive at an appropriate balance? Since globalization can take place under different regimes, what are the implications of more market-driven as against more non-market or planned regimes? Under what circumstances do levels of economic activity and economic structures converge or diverge? What is the effect on inequalities, among and within countries? What are the implications for structures and policies in the sociopolitical sphere of the need to comply with requirements of free trade or to ensure a level playing field for international economic transactions? What are the limitations placed on national sovereignty by the various processes of globalization (limitations voluntarily accepted and their consequences, such as in joining customs unions, other regional arrangements and international agreements and limitations imposed by circumstance, whether economic, technological, or political?) Who (individuals, groups, sectors, industries, regions or countries) gains from the processes of globalization and who loses under various "regimes"? What is gained and what is lost?

122. Following a brief description of trends in the size, scope and activities of government at different levels, there is a brief recapitulation of the debate on the proper role of government in its responsibility for promoting the "common good" and the various developments and forces that now drive the debate. The challenges faced by Governments in responding to new local and global circumstances in meeting citizen needs and to their evolving expectations of what government can deliver, are analysed from four perspectives: What is the most appropriate balance among the different roles of government — as provider, promoter, arbiter and regulator? At what level (local, regional, national, international) are different

functions of government best performed bearing in mind the often conflicting needs of efficiency in delivery and responsiveness to people's definition of their varied needs, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of organizing services on a centralized or decentralized basis? How can the different and changing concerns of diverse groups and interests in society be accommodated through governmental intervention? What partnerships are appropriate between government and other social actors in the new global circumstances?

123. A brief recapitulation of the issues involved and the views on the relative merits of market and non-market approaches to meeting social needs, particularly for ensuring that the basic needs of all are met, is followed by a review of how and why the pendulum has swung from favouring the one and then the other approach. The pendulum has clearly been moving toward market-based or quasi-market approaches, inspired, in large measure, by the argument that such approaches are both more efficient and make possible an allocation of resources more in line with the needs and wishes of the population. The following questions that need further debate and clarification are raised. What lies behind the efficiency argument? What role does ideology play? What is the impact of market failure on the outcome? Since the market approach reduces the scope and role of the political process in determining whose wishes are acted upon, whose needs are met, what is decided and who pays, and what is its impact, favourable or unfavourable, on different groups? What are the implications for the promotion of the "common good" and indeed for the definition of the common good?

124. Regarding the change of boundaries between the private and public domains, three different but closely related trends are examined briefly, pointing to their possible ethical as well as practical implications. The first trend concerns the apparent shift in the importance given to meeting individual as against collective needs and its consequences. The second trend concerns privacy and freedom from intrusion by public or private agents. While social surveillance, monitoring or "snooping" are in many respects socially useful, benefiting and protecting individuals, they can also be an unwarranted intrusion and an instrument of unacceptable social control. In this context, how has technology changed the balance between protecting people and controlling people and how is it affecting notions of the right to privacy? What is the impact on social behaviour, freedom of action, speech and autonomy of the enhanced technical capacity for surveillance of an individual's actions, movements, speech and political expression? The third trend concerns the conflict between privacy and confidentiality, on the one hand, and the economic and social importance of freely available information, its wide dissemination and easy access, on the other.

125. Discussion of developments in the bio-medical sciences focuses on bio-ethics of particular contemporary concern and why these are critical to the future shape of society. Variable cultural responses to the issues are discussed and the question posed: can universal ethics be consistent with cultural diversity?

126. The bio-ethical questions raised by four major new developments in bio-science and medicine are discussed, together with their different likely impact on different societies and different groups: the new genetics; the new reproductive technologies; transplantation; and the medical prolongation of life. The topic concludes with a brief discussion of bio-ethics in relation to social justice and human rights, and the likely impact of advances in bio-medicine on population trends, structures and related matters.

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Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In annex III of its resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, the Economic and Social Council recognized the dual role of the regional commissions as the outposts of the United Nations and the regional expression of the Organization, and gave guidance on measures to be undertaken with respect to this dual role. The present report updates the Council on actions undertaken by the regional commissions during the period under review with respect to the guidance given. A review of the regional commissions' cooperation with other non-United Nations regional bodies is contained in addendum 1 to the present report (E/2000/10/Add.1); a review of selected activities implemented during the period between the Council's substantive sessions of 1999 and 2000 is contained in addendum 2 (E/2000/10/Add 2); and the resolutions and decisions adopted by the regional commissions during the period under review that require action by the Council or are brought to its attention are contained in addendum 3 (E/2000/10/Add.3). In addition, in accordance with Council decision 2000/207 of 4 February 2000, the report reviews in section III the theme for regional cooperation which is "Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: exchange of regional experiences". Finally, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV), the report of the Executive Secretaries is contained in section V of the report.

The summaries of the economic surveys of the five regions have been made available to the Economic and Social Council. The annual reports of the regional commissions contain further background information on the issues addressed in the report and its addenda. They are issued as supplements to the *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*.

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 1998/46, annex III, the Economic and Social Council underscored the dual role of the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations and the regional expression of the Organization in which they form a part in the institutional landscapes of their respective regions. The overall guidance of the Council with respect to this dual role emphasized the need to link to activities of the commissions more effectively with the overall activities of the Organization in the economic and social fields. It also encouraged close cooperation between the commissions and other regional bodies in order to reinforce collective action on the basis of complementarities and core strengths of their respective programmes of work. The regional commissions have acted decisively thereafter, and the period under review reflects the substantial steps taken in this regard.

2. On the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations, the report reviews under section I positive developments in linking the activities of the commissions more effectively with the overall activities of the Organization, covering, in particular, the commissions' involvement in the activities of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and their cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Also under section I, the report reviews the role of the commissions as the regional expression of the United Nations and their involvement in and contribution to global events and debates. Due consideration is also given to regional coordination meetings that the Council called for in order to ensure that work of the United Nations system is coordinated at the regional level. Cooperation with regional bodies outside the United Nations system is highlighted in addendum 1 to the present report (E/2000/10/Add.1).

3. Activities of the commissions, in the context of trends and the most recent and relevant economic events, are reviewed briefly under section II and more in detail in Addendum 2 to the report (E/2000/10/Add.2). Section III on interregional cooperation reviews follow-up action to the world conferences of the 1990s from a regional perspective. It also reviews the intensified cooperation among the commissions. Section IV updates the Council on recent measures undertaken by the commissions for furthering their effectiveness and efficiency. Section V contains the report of the Executive Secretaries which includes a summary update of their views on the new international financial architecture. It also includes their views on globalization, regionalism and development. The Executive Secretaries also include in their report proposals for strengthening policy dialogue at the global level between the Council and the regional commissions. Resolutions and decisions emanating from sessions of the commissions, held during the period under review, that require action by the Council or are brought to its attention, are contained in addendum 3 to the report (E/2000/10/Add.3).

I. Recent developments, including follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46

4. In its guidance on the role of the commissions as outposts of the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council called for their active participation in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and UNDG meetings and their work. It also called for their active cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD and UNDP, natural partners in the economic and social sectors. With respect to the role of the commissions as part of their respective regional landscapes, the Council's mandate included the holding of regional coordination meetings under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General, for improved coordination of the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level; and improved cooperation with other regional bodies in their respective regions, which is reviewed in addendum 1 (E/2000/10/Add.1).

A. The regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations

1. Participation in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)

5. The Executive Secretaries of the regional commission have actively participated in the meetings

and activities of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and for that purpose have scheduled, to the extent possible, the meetings of the Executive Secretaries in conjunction with the meeting of the committee. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), who headed a task force of the Executive Committee that prepared the paper entitled "Towards a new international financial architecture" (January 1999), as a collective response of the Executive Committee to the recent international financial crisis, has been entrusted, during the period under review, by the Convenor of the Executive Committee, with its update. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC is also a member of the Task Force that is overseeing the finalization of the Executive Committee's paper on the social dimensions of macroeconomic policy. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/14) submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1999, the commissions submitted to the Executive Committee in 1999 a project proposal on an interregional comparative study on social safety net programmes, to be executed by the five commissions under the coordination of ECLAC. The project, which will produce five regional papers and an interregional overview on the experience gained in the implementation of safety net programmes, will be submitted for funding under the Development Account for the period 2002-2003.

6. The regional commissions continued to participate in the meetings of UNDG and its Executive Committee. Their participation ensures a flow of mutually useful information and helps develop an appreciation of each other's work, priorities and capacities. In substantive terms, following the guidance contained in paragraph 41 of General Assembly resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998, participation of the regional commissions in the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) has been the main focus of attention of their involvement with the work programme and activities of UNDG.

7. As also reported by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 (E/1999/14, paras. 45-49), the regional commissions were fully involved in the preparation of the guidelines for CCA and UNDAF. In respect of the actual implementation of these guidelines, the involvement of the regional commissions in CCA and UNDAF has been limited, as is evident from a review recently undertaken by the Development Group Office (DGO/UNDG) of the UNDAF pilot phase.

8. Clearly more efforts are needed, both by the regional commissions and by the resident coordinators at the country level, with the support and encouragement of UNDG, to secure greater involvement of the regional commissions for incorporating regional and subregional dimensions in CCA and UNDAF. In response to these needs, the regional commissions, with the support and cooperation of DGO/UNDG, are working to organize CCA/UNDAF workshops at the seats of their respective secretariats. The first two were held by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva on 29 March 2000 and by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on 5 May 2000. The workshops for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ECLAC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will be held in the coming months.

2. Cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

9. The regional commissions worked particularly closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD during the period under review. They continue their cooperation within the context of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and their usual participation in Project LINK (an international collaborative research group for econometric modelling, coordinated jointly by the Development Policy Analysis Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and the University of Toronto), in the area of research and policy analyses and in monitoring and analyses of emerging global and regional trends and macroeconomic policies for their respective flagship publications, namely the *World Economic Survey* and the regional economic and social surveys. In addition, they have recently begun intensive collaboration in the two areas of information and communication technology for development and financing for development, as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is in charge of the preparations for intergovernmental reviews of the two issues at the global level and the commissions are

holding regional meetings and other activities whose outcome and results are to input into the debate at the global level.

10. The regional commissions are also participating closely with UNCTAD in those two emerging areas. The Executive Secretaries and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will hold an interactive debate on 7 July 2000 in connection with the review of the Council of the subject at its High-level Segment. The regional commissions and UNCTAD are also expected to cooperate closely with respect to the regional meetings being organized by the regional commissions on financing for development. At the tenth session of UNCTAD, at the invitation of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Executive Secretaries of the five regional commissions participated in an interactive debate with him on globalization, regionalization and development. The five papers presented by the Executive Secretaries will be published by UNCTAD.

(a) Cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

11. ECE is working closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, devoted to energy. It has participated regularly in the Inter-Agency Task Force on preparations for the ninth session of the Commission, convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, providing a variety of inputs, including ECE documents relating to sustainable energy development; an updated matrix of ECE activities in the field of sustainable energy; and the regional key issues as approved by the ECE Intergovernmental Task Force on Contributions to the Commission at its ninth session. ECE is preparing case studies on these issues for the consideration of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development established in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission. In addition, at the request of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy considered, at its session in November 1999, the draft World Energy Assessment to be submitted to the Commission at its ninth session.

12. Close cooperation is ongoing between the statistical division of ECE and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see E/1999/14, para. 13). In addition, new areas of cooperation include ECE's initiative on statistics and indicators for social process (a contribution to the preparation of the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development) and the preparation of a review of the statistical activities carried out as a follow-up to the Summit.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

13. ESCAP has continued its cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs through regular exchange of research findings and information on the emerging opportunities created and challenges posed developments in the global economic environment for developing countries of the ESCAP region. The *World Economic and Social Survey, 1999*[1] and *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 1999*[2] issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ESCAP respectively contributed to the international debate on the causes of the financial and economic crisis in Asia, the impact on the global and regional economies, and the prospects for recovery and various policy measures, international and regional, that could help avert future crisis.

14. ESCAP continues to participate in and contribute to the deliberations of the Committee for Development Policy serviced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A follow-up activity to the high-level seminar on managing capital flows: national and international dimensions, jointly organized by ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Bangkok in 1998, in which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs took part, is planned for implementation during the current biennium.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

15. ECLAC has continued its ongoing collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the monitoring of major trends and events of the world economy, through the provision of statistical data and analyses on the regional economy. Collaboration has been particularly intense in the area of population, in which, besides the regular updating of population estimates, ECLAC staff taught two modules in the training workshop for trainers on civil

registration and vital statistics systems organized by the United Nations Statistics Division and ESCAP (Bangkok, 1999). In addition to this, ECLAC has been fully incorporated into the Inter-Agency Task Force on preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

16. During the past year, ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs collaborated on a range of policy issues relating to governance, public administration, the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s,[3] and youth matters. ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are cooperating in the implementation of the plan of action of the United Nations Public Administrative Management (UNPAM) programme which aims to develop an Internet-linked network of institutions, Governments and other organizations with information and knowledge on critical aspects of public sector policies and management. The core thematic areas are public policies governance systems and institutions; civil service/public sector reform; and management innovation and development and public finance. ECA is one of the regional centres whose main function will be to serve as regional information clearing houses; regional on-line training programme developers; and regional on-line conference organizers.

17. ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized an African Youth Forum for the United Nations System on the theme "Empowering African Youth for Action" in April 2000 in Addis Ababa, as a follow-up to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1998.

18. ECA and the Office of the Special Coordinator on Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL) are working together to assist in the process for undertaking the independent evaluation of the United Nations-New Agenda for the Development of Africa, in preparation for the final review and appraisal of that programme. Both collaborated closely in preparing inputs to the follow-up report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development on Africa (A/54/133-E/1999/79) submitted to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

19. Cooperation between ESCWA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs revolved around macroeconomic policies, statistics, energy, sustainable development, social issues relating to follow-up to global conferences, the disabled, youth and the family and information technology. In the area of energy, ESCWA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs cooperated in holding a regional consultative meeting on world energy assessment (Beirut, November 1999). ESCWA also participated in the United Nations International Roundtable for Transportation, energy efficiency and sustainable development (Cairo, December 1999).

20. Cooperation is also ongoing between the two organizations on issues pertaining to the disabled, regional demographic estimates and projections and workshops and meetings concerning various statistical areas such as gender statistics in the Arab world, vital statistics and civil registration systems, and the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA).[4]

21. ESCWA also provided inputs on the dissemination of success stories relating to renewable energy resources in the region for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to be held in April 2001. ESCWA will also provide a general review of progress made at the regional level on follow-up to Agenda 21[5] for the regional consultative meeting on sustainable development to be convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Beirut, October 2000). Furthermore, the interregional advisers of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the areas of energy and water will be involved in the coordination of regional activities with their ESCWA counterparts.

22. ESCWA, like all other regional commissions, is a member of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections, demographic estimates and projections being an area where regular consultations are held between the two organizations regarding regional data on the subject. ESCWA is producing benchmark data for the region as an input into the Department of Economic and Social Affairs "United Nations World Estimates and Projections". Both are also cooperating in preparing the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), which is to be developed

into a comprehensive statistical system for the Arab countries.

(b) Cooperation with UNCTAD

ECE

23. Cooperation with UNCTAD in the field of economic analysis is well established. For the preparation of its Trade and Development Report report, UNCTAD draws on data and analyses provided by ECE for the economies of the region. Starting in 1999, ECE has undertaken to supply UNCTAD with a text on developments in the transition economies of Eastern Europe, the Baltic region and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for inclusion in the Trade and Development Report. Conversely, ECE relies on UNCTAD for data concerning the global context for the ECE economies.

24. In the area of transport, cooperation with UNCTAD has been strengthening with respect to landlocked and transit developing countries and ECE has offered to cooperate with UNCTAD in assisting these countries in adopting the internationally agreed ECE transport norms and regulations with a view to lowering their transport and transit costs and improving transport safety and environmental protection.

25. ECE has also strengthened its working relationship with UNCTAD in the area of trade facilitation. UNCTAD actively participates in the development of trade facilitation recommendations through the International Trade Procedures Working Group hosted by ECE's trade facilitation body, United Nations/CEFACT (United Nations Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport), and has taken an active part in the annual CEFACT conference, presenting its technical assistance work in support of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. ECE and UNCTAD have also jointly participated in several workshops and seminars explaining the role of ECE in developing recommendations and of UNCTAD in providing technical assistance. In this connection, UNCTAD actively participates in ECE's work to develop trade facilitation recommendations. A jointly developed recommendation on the establishment of national trade facilitation bodies was approved in 1999 by United Nations/CEFACT, and a joint document containing guidelines to create an efficient environment for trade and transport has been recently published.

ESCAP

26. Cooperation with UNCTAD included the following: (a) an expert group meeting held in February 2000 with the participation of UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to develop a regional information infrastructure on trade and investment. The meeting identified some mechanisms and modalities for developing the regional information infrastructure; (b) a senior officials meeting organized in August 1999 in collaboration with UNCTAD and the Asian Development Bank in August 1999 to prepare developing countries for the Third World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference; (c) in conjunction with the tenth session of UNCTAD, ESCAP participated in a Symposium on Economic and Financial Recovery in Asia and is participating in the UNCTAD Conference on Debt Management; (d) ESCAP is collaborating with UNCTAD to develop a pilot training programme to assist ESCAP members in increasing their capacity in trade and investment promotion by supporting and encouraging the sharing of resources and expertise between trade-related training institutes in Asia; (e) in consultation with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries of UNCTAD, and as part of the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s[6] preparatory to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, ESCAP commissioned three subregional studies (South Asia, South-East Asia and Pacific) focusing on four priority areas, namely, finance for development, social issues, external trade performance and economic infrastructure. On the basis of these subregional studies, a synthesis paper will be prepared and presented as the main substantive document to a regional Expert Group Meeting and to the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries.

ECLAC

27. Cooperation between ECLAC and UNCTAD included: (a) a joint project involving individual country case-studies of private sector interests in international and regional negotiations, mechanisms for diffusing information from the public to the private

sector, and mechanisms for making up the negotiating agenda; (b) the "Regional meeting on international trade research and training needs in Latin America and the Caribbean", which took place in Santiago, Chile, on 4 and 5 November 1999, organized by ECLAC in cooperation with UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Subsequently, the "First continental meeting of Programme on Training Development in the Field of Maritime Transport (TRAINMAR)", was jointly organized by ECLAC and UNCTAD (Santiago, Chile, 1-3 December 1999); and (c) ECLAC presentation on the situation of landlocked countries in Latin America and the Caribbean at the Meeting of Governmental Experts from Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Representatives of Donor Countries and Financial and Development Institutions, organized by UNCTAD (New York, 24-26 August 1999). ECLAC also presented a study on the topic "Multilateral negotiations from a regional perspective" at the International workshop "Developing a positive Venezuelan agenda for the Millennium Round", organized by UNCTAD and the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry (Caracas, 9-11 August 1999).

28. In addition to the above, ECLAC and UNCTAD have continued their exchanges of experiences and information on trade and efficiency, such as transport facilitation, electronic data interchange (EDI) in transport and the development of trade efficiency assessment measures. Both institutions continued assisting Central American countries and regional organizations like the Central American Commission for Maritime Transport (COCATRAM) (maritime transport) and the Permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) (economic integration) in the development of multimodal transport projects and seminars. Regional research on industrial structuring and international competitiveness in Latin America, Asia and Africa, undertaken in cooperation with UNCTAD, was concluded, and the final report is being published by UNCTAD under the title "Coping with globalization: transnational, industrial restructuring and competitiveness in developing countries".

ECA

29. In response to General Assembly resolution 54/235 concerning the preparation for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in 2001, ECA and UNCTAD have collaborated in organizing two subregional preparatory meetings for francophone and anglophone African countries. The first preparatory meeting, for English-speaking African countries, was held at ECA from 27 to 29 March 2000. The second preparatory meeting, for the French-speaking African countries, was held from 18 to 20 April 2000 in Niamey, the Niger. Both organizations intend to hold a special event to raise the awareness of African policy makers about the importance of the upcoming conference, to be held in conjunction with the joint meeting of African Ministers of Trade and Finance scheduled for 20-22 November 2000.

30. Both organizations have been working together to support and encourage e-commerce development in Africa and jointly organized a regional workshop in Nairobi in 1999. ECA has also exchanged views with UNCTAD on issues pertaining to the creation of science and technology policy for African countries and both have agreed to develop further exchange of ideas and information.

ESCWA

31. ESCWA's long-standing cooperation with UNCTAD became official through the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations in 1997. In 1999, cooperation between the two organizations involved substantive inputs of UNCTAD into two ESCWA expert group meetings on trade and environment and trade efficiency. In addition, cooperation involves activities in e-commerce, foreign direct investment (FDI) and World Trade Organization-related issues which include participation in expert group meetings, joint preparation of regional training and inputs into selected components of ESCWA's work in these areas. It would also involve training and advisory services pertaining to understanding the implications of the World Trade Organizations by various sectors and assistance in accession thereto for ESCWA countries that require such assistance. Special attention will be given to assisting member States in negotiations pertaining to the fields of agriculture and trade in services. Furthermore, an ESCWA/UNCTAD project on training and human resource development in the field of foreign trade programme (TRAINFORTRADE) for the ESCWA region, in Arabic, is currently under consideration. ESCWA is

also involved in launching UNCTAD's World Investment Report in the ESCWA region.

3. Cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

32. The regional commissions provided their programme budgets for the biennium 2000-2001 as well as their draft medium-term plans for the period 2002-2005 to the Bureaux of UNDP through the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the regional coordination meetings.

ECE

33. In the course of 1999, ECE carried out a number of projects funded by UNDP in the areas of energy and statistics. Cooperation with UNDP continued in the extension of the project on energy efficiency demonstration zones for which the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an important source of funding. ECE also assisted in the preparatory phase of several GEF/UNDP projects relating to energy efficiency and greenhouse gas mitigation strategies. In statistics, the project on a pilot census in Armenia was completed in December 1999. Despite its financial difficulties, UNDP has approved funding for the year 2000 for the continuation of the project on human development statistics and social trends reporting in Eastern and Central Europe and CIS. A new trade-related project on the promotion of national capacities for international development cooperation has also been approved for UNDP funding in 2000.

34. In addition, UNDP was among the four partner organizations that collaborated with ECE in the organization of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in Geneva in January 2000. The Regional Bureau for Central and Eastern Europe and CIS contributed a paper on national mechanisms to the Meeting and representatives of UNDP were part of the secretariat support staff for the finalization of the agreed conclusions of the Meeting. Together with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) UNDP also provided financial support enabling the participation of a large number of non-governmental organizations from ECE countries with economies in transition to be present. Preceding the ECE meeting, a half-day UNDP panel was organized on the contribution of women to the economies in transition that gathered representatives from countries of Central and Eastern Europe and CIS.

ESCAP

35. For the duration of the first Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (1997-2001), UNDP has approved five regional/subregional projects for implementation by ESCAP. They cover the areas of strengthening national capacities in statistics, promotion of women in small business and gender equality.

36. The UNDP offices in the region have also approved several national projects for implementation by ESCAP.

37. Although overall extrabudgetary cash contribution towards ESCAP's technical cooperation activities decreased only slightly in 1999, UNDP's allocation of resources from its intercountry programme resources for regional projects decreased by 53.7 per cent, from US$ 662,770.00 for six regional/subregional projects in 1998 to US$ 307,095.00 for three regional/subregional projects in 1999. ESCAP's cooperation with UNDP in the execution of country projects financed from the support for policy and programme component of UNDP's resources amounted to approximately US$ 1,190,920.00.

ECLAC

38. The collaboration with UNDP has continued along two main lines, supporting the socio-economic aspects of governance in the region and the delivery of technical assistance at the national level, including the assessment of the impact of natural disasters.

39. As part of the 20/20 initiative approved at the World Summit for Social Development, and with funds from the Government of Norway, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ECLAC carried out a joint study in 13 countries from the region on public spending on basic social services. The conclusions of the project were published in the form of a book in October 1999.

40. In follow-up to a joint UNDP/ECLAC/Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project on macroeconomic policy and poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, concluded in 1998 with UNDP funds, ECLAC has continued research on the effects of

macroeconomic policies on employment and income distribution. ECLAC is acting as a cooperating agency in several UNDP country projects. Most of these projects are aimed at supporting national efforts for eradicating poverty and improving macroeconomic management and policy coordination, particularly in terms of employment generation, investment promotion and sustainable environmental management. Currently ECLAC has a portfolio of 21 UNDP-funded projects under execution, amounting to US$ 1.48 million for regional projects and US$ 1.38 million for country projects.

ECA

41. ECA and UNDP have worked closely together on a range of issues during the past year. ECA has been a member of the steering committee on the UNDP African Internet initiative and has worked closely with UNDP in the implementation of this project. ECA has also worked very closely with the UNDP Sustainable Development Networking Programme in Africa. UNDP is a member of the Partnership for Information and Commission Technologies in Africa (PICTA), which brings together multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector, all working together to implement the African Information Society Initiative — the framework for building information and communication technologies in Africa. UNDP and UNIFEM provided funds to ECA for the purpose of organizing the subregional follow-up meetings on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in various locations in Africa as well as the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women held in November 1999 in Addis Ababa.

42. UNDP's Peace for Development Unit in Addis Ababa has worked closely with ECA in the launching of ECA's Mano River Basin Initiative aimed at addressing the subregional dimension of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. ECA and UNDP are collaborating in organizing the fourth African Governance Forum (AGF IV) which will be held in Kampala, Uganda, in the second half of the year. The theme of AGF IV is the role of the parliamentary system in governance. Moreover, UNDP continued to provide funding for the project on the establishment of the African Economic Community, under implementation in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

ESCWA

43. In 1999, cooperation with UNDP mainly focused on environmental and social issues, namely, national programmes for promoting sustainable development at the institutional level and an environmental strategy and action plan; the promotion of sustainable human development at the national level; the promotion of gender statistics for the Arab countries; a poverty eradication programme for Yemen; and integrated follow-up to global conferences in the area of social development at the regional level, a three-year project launched in 1998. UNDP contributed about US$ 1,355,000 towards the implementation of activities in these areas. The flagship project on integrated regional follow-up by the Arab States to United Nations global conferences, financed by UNDP and executed by ESCWA, is one of the landmarks of cooperation between ESCWA and UNDP. The project cooperation involves other United Nations agencies, namely, UNICEF, UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Some of the major accomplishments of this project in 1999 consisted of round-table discussions on civil society partnership in follow-up to global conferences and the creation of a web site on the Intranet and Internet on the project, and the establishment of a Steering Committee for the project that involves various actors including inter-agency, governmental and non-governmental partners.

44. ESCWA and UNDP cooperation in the area of gender statistics comprises another landmark exemplified by the holding of an expert group meeting on the implications of the United Nations conferences for social statistics which marked the beginning of regional efforts to underscore the significance of social statistics, a workshop for national producers and users of gender statistics in seven Arab countries and a regional workshop on gender statistics which facilitated exchange of experiences and good practices in this area. It also resulted in the publication of a statistical portrait of men and women in the Arab region. ESCWA, with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), is also providing assistance to the UNDP/Jordan office in formulating a two-year technical assistance project aimed at building training capacity for microenterprises and small enterprises and in preparing the requisite training material.

45. UNDP's contributions to ongoing projects in the year 2000 are estimated at US$ 947,000 which will

also cover the same areas mentioned above, excluding those relating to human development, which were concluded in 1999.

B. The regional commissions as the regional expression of the United Nations

46. Because of their dual role, the regional commissions are able to bring global concerns to their respective regions, and regional perspectives to global debates. This is well illustrated by recent significant debates and initiatives of the commissions as well as by regional meetings organized in response to global events.

1. Significant substantive issues

ECE

47. At the 1999 annual session of the Commission, the economic debate focused on the recovery in south-eastern Europe after the conflict in Kosovo. Since that session, a number of related follow-up activities have been undertaken.

48. In the area of policy and analysis, the 1999 issue of the *Economic Survey of Europe, No. 1*,[7] included a now widely quoted and disseminated study on "Postwar Reconstruction and Development in South-East Europe".[8]

49. The Conference of European Statisticians discussed the role of statistics in the programme for recovery and reconstruction of South-Eastern Europe after the conflict in Kosovo. A task force was set up for promoting and coordinating initiatives with the participation of the major international agencies involved in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe), in particular the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) among others.

50. In the context of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), a number of projects were initiated to assist countries in the region in rehabilitating and interconnecting their electric power systems in order to enhance electricity trade and exchanges. Efforts were also undertaken to ensure that gas continued to flow through Yugoslavia to meet the winter needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

51. The Committee on Human Settlements decided to focus its assistance to the reconstruction in South-East Europe on issues of land administration. Within the framework of the Working Party on Land Administration, ECE organized a mission on the re-establishment of cadastre in Kosovo.

52. ECE is actively involved in the Working Table II of the EU Stability Pact where ECE has presented a number of projects for south-east Europe, most of which are being implemented jointly with SECI.

ESCAP

53. Within its broad mandate of strengthening regional and subregional economic cooperation for promoting trade, investment and technology linkages and accelerating industrial development, ESCAP has been making efforts to assist the region's developing countries in integrating into the international economic environment on a more equitable basis. In recognition of the primacy of the rules, principles and concepts on which the global trading system is built, ESCAP accords high priority to the effective and active participation of developing countries in the future World Trade Organization negotiating agenda.

54. The Commission, at its fifty-sixth session, debated the theme topic of "Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition in the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis". Discussions on the topic were of special importance in the wake of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference and the tenth session of UNCTAD. A related issue discussed at the session was on possible regional mechanisms for the exchange of information and early warning systems in relation to the financial and economic situation in the countries of the region, as well as recommendations for future action in pursuance of Commission resolution 55/2[9] on "Economic and financial monitoring and surveillance in the ESCAP region".

ECLAC

55. ECLAC provided to its recent twenty-eighth session in Mexico, a report entitled "Equity, Development and Citizenship" (LC/G.2071

(SES.28/3)) which reflects ECLAC's views on the integrated nature of development. The report proposes that development entails more than simply the complementarity of social, economic, environmental and democratic governance policies. It should also include human capital, social well-being, sustainable development and citizenship. In other words, an integrated development process should include people's welfare and the sustainability of habitat in addition to economic growth. Progress and growth should translate into an increasingly and more comprehensive satisfaction of existing needs. Development should not only be aimed at fulfilling people's growing aspirations in terms of consumption, however legitimate they may be, but also fulfil people's aspirations for a better quality of life. In addition, it should also seek to create a social and human climate of security and mutual trust to consolidate a democratic political system that provides for greater participation by the public in government management and decision-making. It should seek to enhance the well-being of those who have least access to benefits; to give rise to collective undertakings in which citizenry has a greater responsibility and sense of belonging; and to protect and improve the national habitat of those who dwell in it today and those who will do so tomorrow.

56. The Mexico resolution on equity, development and citizenship welcomed the above report, in that it reinforced the idea that development was an integrated process, and requested the secretariat to distribute the document widely and to encourage its consideration by the international organizations concerned. It urged the secretariat to continue to deepen its analysis in several of the issues it covered in the document, namely, social and macroeconomic policies; reinforcement of the concept of citizenship; the interrelationship between development agendas of countries and of the region and policies associated with the globalization process; and the construction of a stable predictable international financial system and its linkage with social development.

ECA

57. ECA has launched an initiative to address the subregional dimension of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Each of these three countries is either emerging from the ravages of war or has been adversely affected by conflicts in the neighbouring countries. Known as the Mano River Basin Initiative, after the river that traverses the three countries and around which they have formed a subregional economic grouping, its aim is to assist the process of post-conflict peace-building within and among the three countries by focusing on development activities that are subregional in nature. The partners collaborating with ECA in implementing the initiative include United Nations agencies and African regional and subregional organizations, namely, the African Development Bank, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), UNDP, the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Bank.

58. The first consultative meeting of the partners of the Mano River Basin Initiative was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 1999, and the second consultative meeting was held on 23 and 24 March 2000, in Conakry, Guinea. The organizations collaborating on this initiative have now begun the process of identifying projects of a subregional nature that would help post-conflict peace-building in the three countries.

59. In addition to post-conflict reconstruction, the Commission has been seized of other central challenges for Africa. The main issues considered by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry (CAMI) (22 and 23 October 1999, Dakar, Senegal), included the strategy for revitalizing private sector development in Africa and the impact of globalization on industrial development in Africa.

60. It was indicated that the Conference on industrial partnerships and investment in Africa focused on such issues as forging partnerships for Africa's industrial development project financing; privatization and industrial partnerships in Africa; financing of small and medium-scale enterprises in Africa; regional economic integration and investment promotion; private financing of infrastructure; and the need for Africa to adopt new approaches and mechanisms for fostering industrialization in Africa. CAMI adopted a common African position on globalization in which it invited African countries, *inter alia*, to support and reinforce current trade negotiations with a view to ensuring a favourable environment for development of African

industry; solicit international support for establishing conditions for successful industrialization in terms of infrastructure and services and enhancing political stability; promote strong industrial growth in order to reverse Africa's marginalization in the context of globalization; enhance competitiveness through stimulating macroeconomic growth, improved infrastructure, reduced transaction costs, better industrial governance, and promoting technological upgrading; strengthen human capital; create an enabling environment for private sector development; and facilitate foreign direct investment (FDI).

61. The first meeting of the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society (21-23 June 1999, Addis Ababa), considered the theme of popular participation for sustainable social and human development in Africa and examined issues such as capacity-building of indigenous African civil society organizations: the establishment of the African Centre for Civil Society; and the promotion of public/private partnership for enhanced and sustained economic, social and human development in Africa.

62. The first meeting of the Committee on Development Information (28 June-2 July 1999) considered harnessing information for development. Under that overall theme, the following sub-themes were addressed: African statistical development: a review and the road ahead in the new millennium; the economic and social benefits to be derived from the use of geographical information technologies; and key issues for development and dissemination in Africa. The meeting put forward a number of recommendations to enhance the contributions of these three areas to the socio-economic development of Africa.

63. The meeting of the Committee on Natural Resources and Science and Technology (15-18 November 1999, Addis Ababa), proposed a number of recommendations for strengthening the science and technology capacity of African countries. These related to the global strategy for building science and technology capacities and sustainable development; linking research findings to industries; and strengthening the role of national and regional institutions in promoting the application of science and technology for management of natural resources.

64. The second session of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning (4-5 May 2000, Abuja, Nigeria) considered the medium-term 2002-2005 for ECA; a paper on overview and plans for assessing regional integration in Africa; and the mid-decade review of the World Summit for Social Development: the African experience.

ESCWA

65. In connection with its twenty-fifth anniversary and the adoption of resolution 220 (XX) of 27 May 1999[10] on the adoption of the Beirut Declaration,[11] at its session in 1999, ESCWA has been seized of elaborating a new vision that defines its role and tasks in line with regional and world developments in the coming century. It convened two meetings to translate the contents of the Declaration into concrete regional priorities that would be arrived at collectively by the United Nations system, Governments and civil society actors as a testimony of partnership reflecting the real concerns of the society at large.

66. The first meeting was held in December 1999 to discuss the role of ESCWA in regional development at the doorsteps of the twenty-first century. The discussions revolved around two studies that had been prepared by ESCWA on the occasion of the celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary in May 1999. The first study was entitled "ESCWA (1974-1999): Twenty-five years of service to the region's development"; the second "The ESCWA region: twenty-five years". This meeting aimed at examining the past for the purpose of formulating concrete recommendations for the future in the light thereof. The meeting involved experts from the Arab region whose discussions revolved around the three main themes addressed by the second study, namely, peace and security, economic and social development and institutions (democracy and human rights). The second meeting was a brainstorming session among eminent persons, held in February 2000 under the title "Promoting the role of ESCWA at the door steps of the twenty-first century". The meetings involved a number of Arab thinkers from intellectual and civil society circles in an attempt to involve all actors of society.

67. The main areas of concern identified during the second meeting included the significance of the development of natural resources and indivisibility of environmental, energy and water concerns; the importance of culture in development and the necessity

of surmounting cultural impediments and of addressing cultural specificities to promote development; the need to accord institution-building special importance, especially in terms of creating an infrastructure for promoting, *inter alia*, democracy and human rights, a sound educational system, fiscal system, good governance and civil society institutions and a sound judicial system; and the need to address regional positions vis-à-vis globalization.

68. ESCWA's effort towards involving high-level non-governmental actors in identifying more specific regional priorities and major areas of concern, within the umbrella of the Beirut Declaration, is undertaken with a view to raising their recommendations at subsequent intergovernmental meetings and reaching a consensus on issues identified.

2. Regional meetings on follow-up to world conferences

69. In view of the decision of the Economic and Social Council to adopt as its theme topic for the agenda item on regional cooperation "Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: exchange of regional experiences", a narrative on this is included under section III of this report.

3. Regional hearings in preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations

70. In preparation for the Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, and at the request of the Secretary-General, the regional commissions convened five regional hearings. All the hearings brought together representatives of the member States, civil society, academics and non-governmental organizations to advance the regional perspectives on how the United Nations could best promote its Charter objectives in the new millennium. With the exception of the hearing for the ESCAP region, all of them took place during 1999 at the respective locations of the commission secretariats. The ESCAP hearing was hosted by Japan in Tokyo on 9 and 10 September 1999. The hearings for the other regions were held as follows: ECE region, 7 and 8 July; ECLAC region, 1 and 2 September; ECA region, 24 and 25 June; and ESCWA region, 23 and 24 May. Results of the ESCWA hearing were reported in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/14, para. 51). (Results of the hearings are available in A/54/754, A/54/281, A/54/280, A/54/503 and A/54/718.)

71. The hearings were conducted on the basis of selected themes relating to the role of the United Nations in the new millennium. While the hearings brought out regional priorities and preferences, there was broad commonality of views and shared conclusions on a number of issues. Challenges of peace, security, development, human rights and good governance were interlinked. The threats to peace and to social and political instability were often rooted in conditions of unemployment and underemployment, poverty, inequality and poor governance. Human rights and good governance were critical requirements of our time. As human rights were indivisible, the promotion of civil and political rights should be carried out in tandem with the promotion of the right to development, including equitable access to health, education and other social services. Human rights could not flourish in the absence of economic and social development, democratic institutions and good governance. Poverty should be regarded as a gross violation of human rights and countries should be encouraged to set time-bound targets for its elimination. Economic development was increasingly driven by knowledge and the ability to organize people around constantly changing tasks, for which a climate of freedom was a precondition. It was pointed out that the enormous and growing disparities between rich and poor nations were undermining the sustainability of development, giving way on the one hand to a phenomenon of overpopulation, and on the other to a phenomenon of overconsumption, both at the expense of all humankind.

72. The regional hearings reaffirmed the role and relevance of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. They also called for greater involvement of the regional organizations in various tasks, especially in matters of peace and security. The United Nations should also strengthen its partnership with other emerging actors in conflict resolution and development, in particular the civil society institutions and the non-governmental organizations.

4. Regional meetings on information technology for development

73. The regional commissions organized regional meetings and consultations on information technology for development between October 1999 and June 2000. All provided brief reports to the current session of the Economic and Social Council on the outcome of their respective meetings/consultations in order to integrate

the regional dimension into the debate of its high-level segment on the theme "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based economy". The regional areas of concern are discussed below.

ECE

74. In its effort to integrate the regional dimension of development in the deliberations on information technology and development during the high-level segment of the forthcoming substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, the ECE secretariat has prepared a substantive background paper on "Information technology, globalization and development". The paper addresses the relationships between information and communication technology (ICT) and key issues such as globalization, economic growth, income distribution, and economic and social risks. It also identifies challenges and opportunities related to ICT as well as directions for action aimed at increasing the capacity of economies in transition to have access to ICT and to use it for accelerating their development.

75. The paper will be circulated at the ECE conference on "Technology transfer for economic development: experiences for countries in transition", to be organized in Zagreb in June 2000, jointly with the Ministry of Science and Technology of Croatia. The ECE member States agreed to provide comments on the paper, to be incorporated by the secretariat. The paper will be finalized at a meeting to be held in early June in which both representatives of ECE member States in Geneva and experts from capitals will be invited to participate. This document will constitute the ECE contribution to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on the matter.

ESCAP

76. ESCAP in cooperation with the Government of India held a regional meeting on information technology (IT) and development in May 2000.

77. The Asian and Pacific region registered the fastest growth averaging 15 per cent in the 1990s in spending in ICT. Considerable progress in making IT applications accessible to economic actors and general population has been achieved in the newly industrializing economies (NIEs) and some members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in some other larger countries, including China and India. Some of these economies are now capable of providing other regional countries with both technology and capital. The surge in the regional flows of FDI in IT illustrates a stepwise spread of investment and technology flows from Japan to the NIEs, from NIEs to ASEAN, and from ASEAN to others with more recent but significant involvement of China and India in this process.

78. While there are many possible outcomes from the continuing improvements in IT, there are also escalating risks for developing countries and economies in transition associated with its use. In many developing countries, in particular the least developed and island developing economies, as well as economies in transition, the level of investment in IT from public and private sources remains inadequately low, resulting in a slowing down of the process of IT diffusion. There are also great disparities in access to IT within different areas of regional countries and among different groups of the population. At the same time, as the experiences of more advanced regional economies has demonstrated, IT offers a once-in-a-century opportunity to create a new development paradigm that can accelerate development even in the poorest countries in the region.

79. Regional cooperation in IT can significantly contribute to the process of IT development of those disadvantaged countries. Because of the nature of their problem, they can easily use the experience, expertise and IT available in more developed regional countries especially for technology transfer, promotion of the use of IT by industries, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the financial and trade sectors, and human resources development. Furthermore, as regional countries are heterogeneous in a wide variety of development and economic levels, such differences can be exploited, with the use of IT, to take advantages of country differences in factors of production.

80. Taking into account the above, the regional meeting (round table) organized by ESCAP in cooperation with the Government of India (New Delhi, May 2000), provided a forum for ESCAP members and associate members to examine the increasingly important role of IT in the context of a knowledge-based global economy as well as to share information and experience on how IT could act as a catalyst for

integrating developing countries into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis through the enhancement of efficiency and growth in their key sectors. The meeting covered the following areas: (a) structural features and processes that characterize a knowledge-based economy and what implications this has for the competitiveness, development and management of new products and services; (b) special efforts needed to create awareness and broad consensus on the needs, benefits and strategies of implementing IT in the commercial and industrial sectors, including promoting investment and trade in and through IT/electronic commerce in the Asian and Pacific region; (c) understanding the "digital divide" and its relationship to the existing and future technology gaps between developed and developing countries; (d) mechanisms and technologies that are required to ensure affordable access to information and connectivity for all, including members of civil society and disadvantaged groups; (e) role of Governments and international and United Nations agencies and other global and regional bodies in creating effective policies and strategies for capacity-building, including human resources and infrastructure development for IT; (f) regional cooperation.

81. To facilitate the discussions, two background documents entitled "Information technology and development I: Commercial and industrial dimensions" and "Information technology and development II: Capacity-building, cooperation and social dimensions", covering the preceding areas, were presented to the meeting.

ECLAC

82. ECLAC provided substantive and organizational support to the International Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean on Information Technology and Development hosted by the Brazilian Government in Florianapolis, on 20 and 21 June 2000.

83. Representatives of member countries and from academia, the private sector and civil society participated in the meeting. The meeting focused the digital gap between the region and the developed world and perspectives for Latin America and the Caribbean in the age of ICT. The meeting was preceded by a one-day introductory conference on general issues regarding "Information society".

84. Despite the regional consensus regarding the importance of harnessing the developmental opportunities offered by globalization, there are many issues that need to be addressed in order to take full advantage of the information technologies, in terms of both development of physical infrastructure and policies aimed at facilitating full interconnectivity. The production patterns of Latin America and the Caribbean are undergoing a complex transition in organizational and technological terms which includes a revolution in the area of information processing systems. Although the transition towards the "society of knowledge" is inherent in the wider transformation, undoubtedly it has specific features and its own dynamic, making it necessary to carry out an in-depth analysis in order to understand the ways in which progress can be consolidated.

85. ECLAC will present a paper exploring the ways in which the region is "metabolizing" its transition towards the "society of knowledge" within the larger panorama of transition towards economies more deregulated and more open to world trade. Special attention is devoted to the changes in the morphology and behaviour of the telecommunications sector and to exploring possible lines of joint action by the public and private sectors, aimed at speeding up technological modernization and at reducing social equity and exclusion problems, which have clearly increased in the region as a result of the structural reforms.

ECA

86. ECA has accorded high priority to the issue of ICTs for development since 1980 with the inception of the Pan-African Development Information System (PADIS). The programme was updated in 1996 with the adoption by the ECA Conference of Ministers of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). The basic concept underlying the AISI is the use of ICTs for the development of information- and knowledge-based economies in Africa. To examine the progress made in the first three years of AISI, ECA organized the first African Development Forum (ADF-99) on the theme of "The Challenge to Africa of Globalization and the Information Age" from 24 to 28 October 1999, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

87. The African Development Forum is an annual event that brings together high-level policy and decision makers and practitioners to focus on a topical issue in Africa's development. Under the overall

theme, ADF-99 had four sub-themes: Africa and the information economy; strengthening Africa's information infrastructure; information and communication technologies for improved governance; and demonstrating access to the information society. ADF-99 was attended by over 950 participants, including stakeholders from civil society and academia, the private sector and high-level public sector officials. Youth, gender, the private sector and African "think tanks" were given particular emphasis. A number of initiatives were spawned at the African Development Forum, including a plan for a regional School Net Africa, an African Distance Learning Programme, discussion lists and activities related to gender and the information age in the context of the five-year review of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, NgoNET Africa (an action group to engage civil society in the promotion of ICT for African development), a telecentre network, activities to support the involvement of the African diaspora in knowledge and development in Africa, the formation of a business-to-business network, the Alliance for African Business and the formation of national action groups with the specific aim of preparing for the Global Knowledge Information Infrastructure.

88. ADF-99 will be followed by a Post-Forum Summit in late 2000 that is intended to provide member countries with the opportunity to assess the results of the African Development Forum and reach consensus on the most promising initiatives for follow-up at the national, subregional and regional levels. The first Post-Forum Summit will examine the information society strategies that were considered by ADF participants to be among the most promising in Africa's search for its own definition of the information society. Between 15 and 20 African heads of State will be invited to the Summit, along with chief executive officers (CEOs) of companies investing in the region and leaders of the development community. Papers and proposals will be prepared on four sets of issues that emerged from ADF-99: policy and regulation within a broad information and communication policy context; applications to support education processes and meet the needs of Africa's youth; electronic commerce — the experience and the potential for Africa; and ICT applications in the area of health.

ESCWA

89. ESCWA held an Expert Panel entitled "Information Technology and Development Priorities in the ESCWA Member Countries in the Context of a Global Knowledge-Based Economy", on 15 and 16 May 2000. The Panel addressed ways to formulate ICT policies, strategies and programmes for the ESCWA member countries and proposals for future innovative approaches by concerned organizations in government, enterprises, federations, non-governmental organizations and other civil society partners as weil as by the United Nations with a view to maximizing the benefits of the knowledge-based economy.

90. The Panel reviewed some 19 substantive presentations by experts from the member countries, and ESCWA staff, as well as from entities such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Topics addressed included the emerging knowledge-based global economy: principal features and implications for IT capacity-building in the ESCWA member countries; economics of information and communications technologies (ICT); e-commerce and new intellectual property rights: their impact on enterprise development in industry, agriculture, trade and services; towards an Arab knowledge-based economy: the role of public and private enterprise, as partners in ICT development; private enterprise and ICT innovation, research and development in ICT and telecommunications; and state of ICTs and relevant technology transfer/acquisition policies: global and regional trends and future prospects, and strategic and resources issues. There were brief statements on IT and telecommunications capacity-building in selected countries/institutions: infrastructures, resources, present trends and future orientations at policy and programmatic levels; IT and telecommunications technologies in selected priority areas such as distance learning, telemedicine, e-governance and environmental management; telework and gender perspectives; and resources for IT and telecommunications development. ESCWA staff presented substantive papers on the status of ICT in the ESCWA member countries; ICT transfer, dissemination and development activity; and sectoral aspects of ICT policy.

5. Regional meetings on financing for development

91. In response to General Assembly resolution 54/196 and the decision of the Preparatory Committee for the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, taken at its resumed organizational session held from 27 to 31 March 2000, the regional commissions will organize meetings in their respective regions, in cooperation with UNCTAD and the regional and subregional development banks. The involvement of the commissions, as well as their partner organizations, in issues of financing for development for their respective regions or subregions, and their convening power for articulating regional perspectives on global issues, should ensure important inputs to the global event to be held in 2001.

92. The regional meetings will be organized in the second half of 2000 so that the results will be fully reflected in the substantive preparations for the global event. The Commissions have begun preparations for these meetings, two of which will be hosted by the Governments of Colombia and Indonesia for the ECLAC and ESCAP regions respectively.

93. In conjunction with the meeting of the Executive Secretaries on 9 and 10 May 2000 in New York, the Executive Secretaries held informal consultations with the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee on the scope and the areas to be covered by their respective meetings. They also held consultations within the context of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD and UNDP, on the organizational and substantive arrangements for these meetings.

6. Improved coordination and cooperation among United Nations agencies at the regional level: meetings chaired by the Executive Secretaries in the five regions

94. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, annex III, five regional coordination meetings were held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General in 1999, and reported on to the Council at its substantive session of 1999. The purpose of these meetings was to achieve greater coherence among the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level. A follow-up series of such meetings under the aegis of the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions will take place between April and June 2000. The meetings will cover the following areas and issues.

ECE

95. Building upon the first Inter-agency Coordination Meeting held for the ECE region in February 1999, a second meeting will be held in June/July 2000 that will review a draft common assessment of the situation in countries with economies in transition, prepared by ECE after the 1999 meeting and revised in the light of comments received from participating agencies. The review will have a three-fold objective: (a) to forge a common understanding on the priority needs and major challenges outlined; (b) to share among participants the policy directions promoted by each organization in its respective areas of competence, as a response to these challenges and needs; (c) to review the consistency among those directions in a United Nations system-wide perspective and, on this basis, to identify areas and activities where cooperation could be initiated or strengthened.

96. The meeting is expected to address two specific issues: (a) the support to be provided to sustainable social reforms and programmes in the context of transition, the challenge for the United Nations system active in these countries being to efficiently assist in addressing the structural deficiencies that hamper the development of the human resource base in the medium and long term, in particular through capacity-building programmes aiming at removing these deficiencies and developing a "good social governance"; (b) to determine how to fully use the United Nations system at the regional level for the purpose of economic and social development. This regional structure has significant proved assets: ability to address transboundary issues, to organize policy debates and exchange of experiences among countries having similar characteristics and concerns, to facilitate policy convergence, promoting subregional and regional integration, and to link such integration with developments at the global level. The challenge is to further reinforce these comparative advantages through cooperative undertakings among United Nations agencies that will support the subregional initiatives that are taken by countries of the ECE region and that aim at building lasting peace and development in

various parts of this region (for example, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe).

ESCAP

97. During 1999, eight subcommittees under the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) met and addressed issues relating to (a) infrastructure development, (b) environment and development, (c) water, (d) space applications, (e) poverty alleviation, (f) advancement of women, (g) regional agenda for social development and (h) disability-related concerns.

98. To cite a few examples, the Subcommittee on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, chaired by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has been assisting the secretariat in preparing background documentation for the organization of the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, scheduled to be held in August/September 2000 in Japan, by providing information and data through exchange among its members. The Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation chaired by UNDP poverty alleviation has developed a common programme on empowerment of the poor to respond to the economic crises. In response to General Assembly resolution 52/15, ESCAP and UNESCO jointly organized the launch of the International Year for the Culture of Peace and commemorated the International Day of Peace at ESCAP on 14 September 1999. In general, ESCAP has been addressing priority development issues and implementation in collaboration with the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in Bangkok, and with a number of subregional groupings.

ECLAC

99. Upon the basis of the agreements adopted at the first meeting chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General in 1999, the second regional coordination meeting for the ECLAC region, held on 15 May 2000, dealt with a more focused agenda in which the issue of generating a shared vision of the social equity problem in the region was at the apex.

100. Particular attention was given to setting up the basis for carrying out a survey of the resources of the United Nations system in the Caribbean as a first stage towards improving coordination of activities in that subregion. The meeting also explored different existing modalities for maximizing inter-agency initiatives and, in this context, reviewed activities carried out within the existing inter-agency cooperation schemes: the Inter-agency Technical Committee of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean; the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee for the Follow-up to the World Summit for Children and its working group on the reduction of maternal mortality; the inter-agency meetings to promote the integration of women in development; and the Joint Inter-agency Coordinating Committee for the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The meeting will also examine the regional follow-up process to the various United Nations summits and world conferences led by different agencies.

ECA

101. At the 1999 regional consultative meetings of United Nations agencies in Africa, it was agreed that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s should provisionally constitute the appropriate mechanism for coordination of United Nations system work in Africa. Consequently, the regional consultative meeting of United Nations agencies, to be convened in the framework of the ACC Steering Committee on Special Initiatives on 19 and 20 June 2000 at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, will take stock of the efforts of United Nations agencies working in Africa towards meeting the objectives under the Special Initiative, and the Secretary-General's report on Africa. It will consider indicators/benchmarks for assessing progress towards meeting the programme objectives under each Special Initiative cluster. The meeting will also include a special session on mobilizing the efforts of the United Nations agencies working on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in Africa.

ESCWA

102. Following the first meeting of the United Nations Regional Coordination Group (RCG) on 1 March 1999, regional offices of United Nations entities met for the second time, on 29 April 1999, at United Nations House, Beirut.

103. At the second meeting, it was decided (a) that the secretariat for the RCG would be established at ESCWA; (b) that each entity would appoint a focal point to facilitate coordination; (c) to prepare and exchange notes, through the secretariat, on the impact of the World Trade Organization agreements on their fields of activity; (c) to exchange information on training activities, joint agreements and major publications; (d) to establish a web site to facilitate communication between entities; and (e) finally, that the RCG would meet twice a year. Among actions taken in follow-up to this meeting, ESCWA is in the process of establishing a site for the RCG to serve as a gateway to users inside as well as outside the United Nations system.

104. ESCWA also prepared and distributed a table on activities jointly undertaken in the region by two or more United Nations entities. This table shows that as of 1995, 62 activities involving cooperation between two or more United Nations entities were undertaken in research, training, publications and meetings. The number of ongoing or to-be-completed activities in 1999 amounted to 41. So far, in 2000, activities undertaken by two or more United Nations entities are 18.

105. The first meeting of the RCG for the year 2000 is scheduled for the last week of April.

7. Cooperation with other regional bodies (see E/2000/10/Add.1)

II. Trends and activities (see E/2000/10/Add.2)

III. Interregional cooperation

A. Theme on regional cooperation: follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: exchange of regional experiences

106. Regional and subregional meetings were held by all five regional commissions on follow-up to the five-year review of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen) and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul), between 1998 and 2000. Meetings in follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) took place in 1998. In addition to organizing the above regional and subregional follow-up conferences, which provided forums for discussions, exchange of experiences and renewed commitments to the objectives of the conferences, the commissions have undertaken a range of relevant activities. These have included conducting analytical studies as contribution to the implementation of the goals of the global conferences, as well as playing a facilitating role for bringing together member States, other regional organizations, United Nations entities and specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and other segments of civil society in order to establish and strengthen partnerships for collaborative action towards achievement of the objectives of these conferences. These meetings have clearly shown that the commissions are in a unique position to provide a region-wide forum for assessing the situation, exchanging experiences, developing strategies to address challenges and facilitating the active interface between Governments and civil society.

107. The commissions organized their review meetings in cooperation with other regional bodies and United Nations entities and specialized agencies. Regular consultations have fostered active collaboration and enhanced complementarity of roles and activities between the commissions and their partners, while minimizing duplication of efforts.

108. The outcomes of the regional conferences showed that none of the five regions is immune to internal and external challenges. While major experiences within regions and among regions have been heterogeneous, many of the challenges are common, particularly to developing regions. Although many Governments have made substantial advances towards specific initiatives and instruments that contribute to an accelerated realization of the objectives of the global conferences, major challenges remain with respect to, *inter alia*, the alleviation of poverty; gender-based violence and persistent gender discrimination in the labour market; achieving democratic governance and citizenship; promoting social integration; developing more comprehensive and multisectoral national policies for development; and financing for development. All regional reviews reflected the need for social or development indicators for monitoring and assessment as well as early warning mechanisms.

1. Priority issues and main challenges

ECE

109. The review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action[12] has revealed a number of priority issues and areas of concern. Discrimination in the labour market continues to present problems in terms of gender segregation, persistent wage gaps between women and men, and weak or non-existent social protection schemes for unemployed women and women in atypical employment. Domestic violence, while it affects a great number of women in the ECE region, is still considered a private matter in many countries and there is an insufficient awareness of its consequences, how to prevent it, and the rights of victims. Trafficking in women is a continuing problem in the region, with migrant women, women and girl refugees and displaced persons forming the most vulnerable groups as a result of various conflicts in the region and of the extension of organized crime networks. Women are still excluded from decision-making in political, economic and social spheres, with under-representation in party leadership and elected or appointed bodies. Lack of recognition of gender equality as an integral part of good governance, democracy and human rights, and slow progress in gender mainstreaming indicate a need to strengthen national mechanisms for the advancement of women and to develop better synergy between these mechanisms and civil society.

110. In the area of human settlements, based on the provisions of the Habitat Agenda[13] and Agenda 21, the draft ECE Strategy for Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-first Century places emphasis on issues of common interest and concern for all countries in ECE. Five main challenges were identified: (a) promoting a system of meaningful and democratic governance that responds to the needs of local communities; (b) improving urban environmental performance; (c) facilitating social cohesion and security; (d) promoting market reforms in the housing and urban sectors; and (e) promoting land and real estate markets and securing private rights in land.

111. Many environmental problems of the world have their origin in the ECE region. ECE member countries bear the responsibilities in respect of contributing to a solution of these problems and aspire towards a global leadership role in pursuing sustainable development. Of importance to ECE countries is the integration of environmental policy with other policies as a key strategic tool in promoting sustainable development.

112. In terms of population, the ECE region experienced unprecedented demographic changes in the last two to three decades. Much-reduced birth rates emerged after a long period of fertility reduction and accelerated ageing of population. Apart from North American countries, ECE member States do not consider international migration a remedy and as a result, migration movements have abated in recent years in a number of countries. While the inhabitants of Western countries enjoy some of the highest life expectancies in the world, those in a number of Eastern European countries lag considerably behind, in some instances with an alarmingly large increase in male mortality.

113. These demographic developments pose complex and far-reaching challenges and have dominated the agendas of the regional intergovernmental population meetings.

ESCAP

114. Poverty remained profoundly entrenched and endemic, with millions of people in the region having little access to health, education and other basic social services. Unemployment remained a critical problem. The goals of social integration stood mostly unachieved. The instruments and means for overcoming problems remained far from adequate.

115. Many Governments had made substantial advances in lifting affected peoples in their country out of poverty, giving them opportunities for employment, and reducing levels of social exclusion in their communities. The financial crisis that struck many countries in the Asian and Pacific region beginning in mid-1997, however, set back social development, particularly in East and South-East Asia, increasing unemployment, reducing incomes, intensifying poverty and at the same time severely diminishing the quantity of public resources available for counteracting the adverse consequences of the crisis. Moreover, the intensification of the pace of globalization and liberalization continued to expose the economies of the countries concerned to intense international competition, necessitating nationwide restructuring. This added to the magnitude of the unemployment problem in affected countries including negative impacts on the labour force participation of women.

The region also experienced a slowdown not only in economic activity but also in the implementation of socio-economic development programmes and projects, including those relating to poverty alleviation, health, education, employment, family, social protection, shelter, environment and disaster management.

116. Some of the key gender-related issues identified included the opportunities as well as the challenges offered by globalization and integration, women and poverty, violence against women, human rights of women, women in the decision-making process, and strengthening of institutional mechanisms. The increased vulnerability of women to external shocks and slowing down of growth rates also posed special problems, requiring an integrated approach to remove structural and policy impediments faced by women. In that context, microlevel reforms and sectoral projects and programmes would need to be supported by macro-processes to improve the status of women in a rapidly globalizing world.

117. Key population and development issues include reproductive health and the need for policies and programmes to incorporate the totality of reproductive health care and to aim at reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, induced abortion, infertility, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Attention should also be given to the issue of promoting a quality-of-care approach in providing reproductive health services. There is a greater need to address the issues of adolescent reproductive health, as this has been largely neglected in population and reproductive health programmes. Priority areas in population and development also include population ageing, urbanization, rural-urban migration and international migration.

118. Key environmental issues identified included: mitigating critical urban environmental situations; protecting ecosystems and natural resource bases; the integration of environmental economics and social decision-making; shortage of financial resources to support sustainable development activities; the need to foster and strengthen regional and subregional cooperation to develop coherent programmes to strengthen national-level capacities and joint action; and the need for resources and technology to reverse deteriorating environmental standards.

119. Cutting across the above areas of concern, the major issues and challenges confronting the region consisted of: (a) enhancing recognition that sustainable development, or more specifically poverty eradication, is the responsibility of all sectors in society, not just of the Government alone; (b) accelerating the pace in the establishment of government-civil society links, for example, cooperation between Government and private enterprises, non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutions, and the poor people themselves; (c) promoting progress in the devolution of legal, administrative and financial powers from higher to lower levels of government; (d) developing statistical indicators and efficient monitoring and evaluation systems for policy interventions, for various development projects and programmes; (e) improving resource mobilization and allocation as mandated by the global conferences; and (f) incorporating gender and environmental concerns into all aspects of development.

ECLAC

120. All regional meetings on follow-up to world conferences have shown a main concern with the need to address poverty, employment, social integration and equity in Latin America and the Caribbean. Within this perspective it was underlined that sustainable development requires a reconsideration of macroeconomic and social policies so as to ensure economic development with social equity and respect for human rights. Preventing further inequalities and poverty is possible only if there is a paradigm shift along these lines. The need to include gender equality, social, environmental, population and human rights issues in all public sector policies was very much stressed for the successful implementation of international commitments by member countries of the region.

121. Although moderate growth has taken place in the region, the persistence of the extension of structural poverty affecting particularly women, indigenous groups, rural population and young people remained evident. Uneven income distribution and the tendency towards higher social expenditure and low efficiency were also mentioned. Unequal and sometimes non-existent access to social services and protection schemes together with the persistence of gender discrimination in the labour market still characterizes the region. Therefore, the need to orient labour reforms and productive transformation in such a way as to generate more employment, particularly in the modern

sector of the economy, that would have positive effects on social well-being was stressed.

122. The outcome of the regional conference has also shown that there is a growing concern regarding the relevance of educational reforms as a means to obtain more equity and better opportunities for the future generations and stop intergenerational reproduction of poverty. Particular attention was given to the fact that education of women and girls deserved attention, especially among indigenous and rural populations.

123. The need to increase efforts in respect of capacity-building for the implementation of sustainable development programmes and projects was also stressed. The weight of sociocultural and institutional inertia was seen as a major obstacle to be overcome. The mobilization of public and private sector to promote social integration and sustainable development was identified as a main challenge. Insufficiency of resources was also emphasized. The need for appropriate institutional mechanisms and tools to monitor and evaluate adequately and in a timely manner the implementation of the international agreements was underscored. The improvement of collected data and indicators was considered of major relevance.

124. All processes have underlined the need to further strengthen the role of women in society. Women's empowerment especially at the decision-making level and the promotion of sociocultural changes were considered crucial for the achievement of equality in the region.

125. Last but not least, the need to advance in respect of democratic governing and citizenship participation so as to create a favourable political environment for social development was also emphasized. Civil society participation was considered a very important strategy to eradicate poverty and develop a full citizenship within the framework of democratic governance.

ECA

126. ECA has undertaken a range of activities, including organizing regional and subregional follow-up conferences and conducting analytical studies, as its contribution to the implementation of the goals of the global conferences. These activities have highlighted a number of cross-cutting priority issues and challenges that African countries need to address as part of an integrated response to achieving the goals of the global conferences. An illustrative list of such issues, in no particular order of importance, includes poverty reduction, improved governance, mainstreaming gender perspectives in development, strengthening the statistical databases of member States, and harnessing the skills, institutional infrastructure and financial resources in support of the goals of the conferences.

127. Africa has a high rate of poverty. ECA estimates that 47 per cent of the African population is living below the poverty line of about $37 per person per month. There is, however, a marked difference in the depth of poverty between the North Africa region, with 22 per cent of the population falling below the poverty line and sub-Saharan Africa, with 52 per cent of its population falling below the poverty line (ECA Economic Report on Africa, 1999). The problem of poverty is partly attributable to and exacerbated by the high incidence of unemployment in the region. At the same time, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is reducing life expectancy, diminishing workers' productivity and intensifying poverty at the household levels as a result of the death of many breadwinners.

128. There is increasing recognition that improved governance in its economic and political aspects is essential to achieving the goals of the global conferences. Economic governance entails creating the appropriate economic institutions and pursuing socio-economic policies to achieve sustained growth and development. Political governance pertains to upholding the principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law in which institutions are established to adjudicate, mediate and manage disputes. This aspect of governance is crucial because the outbreak and persistence of conflicts in several African countries has not only slowed the process of realizing the goals of the conferences but, more generally, thwarted the development process in countries in conflict.

129. Gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes is key to the goal of achieving gender parity in all aspects of development. While most African countries have drawn up comprehensive national plans of action for advancing women in the political and economic spheres, many have neither drawn up gender-sensitive sectoral policies, nor defined concrete strategies for coordinating the activities of relevant agencies or institutions dealing with women. Additionally, well-defined mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation process for national plans of action predicated on a set

of carefully formulated indicators have yet to be established. These observed institutional shortcomings are not peculiar to gender mainstreaming alone but are evident in the implementation of the programmes of other global conferences.

130. Reliable data and accurate information are key to the task of monitoring sectoral policies and evaluating progress in implementing the goals of the global conferences. Indeed, as part of the follow-up to the global conferences, African countries recognize the need to develop indicators to monitor progress in the implementation of agreed goals or targets set at the global conferences. Yet, in many African countries, the effort to develop reliable information and statistical data is often plagued by lack of basic data, lack of capacity for data collection and lack of resources with which to collect and store data. Thus, improving the national capacity to produce reliable data and information is essential to the follow-up to global conferences as well as for various aspects of development.

131. Implementing the goals of the global conference requires skills, institutional infrastructure and financial resources. Yet the ability of African countries to implement the goals of conferences is hampered by a lack of critical mass of experts with requisite skills and knowledge in the relevant government departments or agencies entrusted with the follow-up process. Overcoming these limitations will require attracting and retaining high-calibre professionals. Institutional infrastructure for implementation refers both to the establishment of the national decision-making structures and to the enactment of plans and regulations relevant to the programmes of the global conferences. There is progress in these areas, but much remains to be done. For example, a survey by ECA relating to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda revealed that 20 countries had established focal points for national implementation of Agenda 21, 15 had developed national Agenda 21 plans of actions and 17 had adopted laws and regulations on environmental impact assessment (EIA). EIA policy and regulations are being applied in agriculture, forests, land, human settlements, transport and tourism, urbanization and industrial development. In the area of human settlements, 17 countries have adopted shelter policies, 20 countries have enacted laws providing security of tenure and equal access to land, and 18 countries have adopted regulations to prevent discrimination in the housing sector. A significant number of African countries have promulgated national population policies, with many having adopted legislation to enhance reproductive health and reproductive rights.

132. Many African countries are experiencing a fiscal squeeze exacerbated by high external debt burden. This has resulted in very limited financial outlays in support of major commitments of the global conferences such as environment programmes, population issues and the allocation for basic social services, namely, education, health, access to clean water and healthy waste disposal systems. At the same time, there are inadequate mechanisms for mobilization of resources for areas such as shelter. Mechanisms such as mortgage banks and housing savings and credit schemes are lacking in many African countries. In general, the lack of adequate institutional infrastructure and skills, together with insufficient financial resources, is among the most significant constraints that hinder the efforts of African countries to achieve the goals of the various global conferences.

ESCWA

133. Several regional activities have been planned under the project on Integrated Regional Follow-up by Arab States to United Nations Global Conferences (1999-2001). The project is being funded by UNDP, and executed by ESCWA in the Arab region. The objective of this project is to promote well-integrated follow-up actions and to ensure that the plans of action of the conferences guide ESCWA's activities as well as its delivery of assistance to its member States.

134. The project promotes a regional framework for cooperation and exchange of experiences and information at the national and regional levels, with a view to enhancing and enriching the process of implementation and follow-up. It recognizes that cooperation in implementation and follow-up to global conferences at the national, regional, interregional and international levels needs to be conducted on two parallel tracks, namely, cooperation among countries and cooperation between agencies. It also recognizes that successful implementation of conference recommendations must have two prerequisites: that they be integrated within a conceptual framework for development; and that the follow-up activities be institutionalized through interlinked and coordinated implementation mechanisms, at all levels.

135. Thus the development of an integrated conceptual framework that links the themes and interrelated conference recommendations implies the necessity of identifying the cross-cutting objectives and themes of the conferences, as well as the most appropriate modalities and mechanisms for their implementation and for monitoring the follow-up process. Accordingly, in terms of priority issues and main challenges, the project defines five cross-cutting issues raised by the global conferences that are most relevant to the Arab region. They are described below.

(a) Empowerment of women, gender equity and equality

136. All the global conferences have recognized and underlined the fact that women are still facing injustice, are subject to unfair intra-family discrimination, receive less education, have less access to health care, nutrition and property, are still largely unemployed and when employed are underpaid, are victims of violence and abuse, and are relatively excluded from public life, power and decision-making.

137. The global conferences have recommended actions and strategies to combat many of the factors that contribute to sustaining the low status of women and have placed emphasis on the importance of this issue as a major component of human rights protection.

(b) Protection of the environment

138. The global conferences recognized that improving the health and well-being of people depends on a safe environment and, accordingly, in the planning of many development projects, environmental protection has become a major issue. The major causes of environmental degradation have been identified as unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; inadequate waste management; and the high concentrations of pollutants from industry, traffic and overcrowded settlements. One of the most serious environmental consequences is the increasing lack of access to safe water and sanitation.

(c) Empowerment of the family as a social unit

139. Rapid demographic and socio-economic changes, the multiple roles of women, widespread migration, displacement, urbanization, poverty and other related factors have increasingly placed the family unit in the region under strain. It is essential that all development strategies and quality-of-life initiatives recognize the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledge the importance of strengthening, protecting and supporting the family.

(d) Poverty reduction

140. Despite decades of efforts aimed at reducing poverty and promoting social development, poverty is still a major issue of concern in the Arab region, and the number of people living in poverty is actually increasing. The regional conference that ESCWA convened on the Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, held in Beirut from 8 to 11 December 1998, tackled the issue of poverty, discussing its causes and manifestations and warning of its consequences, and formulated actions and strategies in a global effort to combat poverty.

(e) Population movement

141. For the purpose of identifying the effect of population movement on sustainable human development, ESCWA convened a regional conference on the Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Beirut from 22 to 25 September 1998. The conference identified categories of population movement, such as internal migration, which includes urbanization and internal displacement; and international migration, which includes both documented and undocumented migration, and the movement of refugees.

2. Main activities undertaken to respond to these challenges, and their major outcomes; and involvement of various actors in these activities, in particular non-governmental organizations

ECE

142. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held in January 2000. The main outcome of the Meeting was the set of agreed conclusions adopted by the Governments that attended the Meeting. For each of the five areas taken up by the Meeting, the conclusions spell out key areas for action to be undertaken, with specific recommendations and responsible actors clearly specified for each area.

143. The Meeting benefited from a significant participation of non-governmental organizations in the

panels and in the open debate, as well as from their contributions to the agreed conclusions.

144. In the area of human settlements, land administration is crucial for security of tenure and property rights, effective housing policies and the promotion of market-oriented reforms in economies in transition, as well as in the context of European integration. ECE therefore established a specific working party on this issue, to carry out work on land administration guidelines and on the social and economic benefits of good land administration. A series of workshops were held on land market and property rights. Cooperation with the World Bank was enhanced concerning work on financing land administration projects in economies in transition.

145. As a response to Agenda 21 and the needs expressed by countries in the region, ECE has continued its work on legal instruments on the environment — to decrease the pollution load, to promote more effective environmental policies and to improve the possibilities for the public to influence environmental decision-making. Several environmental conventions have been negotiated and signed, the latest being the 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents also entered into force in April 2000. In addition, a new Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution[14] has been adopted (Gothenberg, Sweden, 1999), namely, the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone. All these developments have hugely contributed to combating some of the most pressing environmental problems in the region and brought together new networks of cooperation.

146. Environmental performance reviews (EPRs) have also been carried out on selected countries with economies in transition in the ECE region. Peer reviews of the EPR reports by the Committee on Environmental Policy enable both the strengths and the weaknesses of a country's environmental management to be addressed and its environmental trends to be assessed. Long-term solutions of the problems highlighted in the EPRs that address major issues covered by Agenda 21 are accompanied by strategic orientations and recommendations for environmental policy, developed in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental partners. Joint workshops with other international organizations, for example, UNDP, for selected countries on specific transition issues, are also organized as a follow-up to the review.

147. As a regional follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, a regional population meeting was organized by ECE, jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, and hosted by the Government of Hungary (Budapest, December 1998). The key document adopted by the Regional Population Meeting, entitled "Conclusions", assessed the successes and failures of recent policies and programmes in the various areas and identified needs for future policy and programme developments in response to ongoing population developments. The document reaffirmed the need for continued data collection, analysis and research in support of policy-making with respect to the major issues addressed by the Meeting.

148. In addition, ECE organized a conference on the Status of the Older Population in Europe and North America in December 1999, in Sion, Switzerland, in collaboration with the United States National Institute on Aging (NIA), UNFPA and the Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosch (IKB). The conference had three objectives: to review the conditions of life of older persons in the last decade of this century and identify the challenges for the future; to highlight findings from an ECE project to collect, disseminate and analyse microdata samples from the 1990 round of censuses in Europe and North America; and to prepare an agenda for future research in the field of ageing.

ESCAP

149. Governments focused their policies towards specific initiatives and instrumentalities that contributed to the speedy realization of the goals of the global conferences, both at the sectoral level and at the level of the disadvantaged target groups, taking into consideration the implications of current trends and issues emerging in the rest of the world. Within the limits of their resources and the targets and priorities they have set, Governments have initiated the integration of specific population and social development concerns and environmental and gender considerations into their national development plans. Some have enacted laws and established or strengthened implementing mechanisms in key areas of concern. Some have forged ahead and developed

integrated, multisectoral approaches to sustainable development which necessitated the establishment of national focal points or coordinating bodies for the implementation of the outcomes of global conferences/summits.

150. Although firmly committed to principles of self-reliance and self-help in the formulation and implementation of their development agenda, Governments in the region recognized the importance and centrality of assistance and support that could emanate from the international community. As the focal point of the United Nations in this region, ESCAP has consulted and cooperated with other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in the analyses of poverty alleviation issues and other population, social, environmental and related problems in the region; and in the formulation of action programmes for addressing these problems. An important example of these ESCAP initiatives is the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, as adopted in 1995 and amended in 1997, which contains time-bound goals and targets in various areas of concern including poverty alleviation, population, health, education, employment, shelter, environment, disasters, crime, social protection and the family. Moreover, subsequent to the conferences/summits, studies were undertaken and meetings and consultations were convened by ESCAP to exchange experiences and forge agreements among countries in the region on guidelines and plans of action on various areas including disability (Bangkok, 1999) and ageing (Macao, China, 1998). ESCAP has also played a facilitator role for Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other segments of civil society with respect to establishing and strengthening partnerships or undertaking collaborative action towards the achievement of common objectives. In this regard, ESCAP has also collaborated with the intergovernmental organizations (for example, ASEAN, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC)), the private sector and other segments of civil society (for example, the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements in Asia and the Pacific (CITYNET)) in implementing specific projects. To strengthen national capabilities, ESCAP has disseminated information on progress and provided advisory services and technical assistance on various areas of concern in the region relating to population and social development, women in development and environment and sustainable development. Governments have tried to mobilize the special capabilities of ESCAP in respect of finding technical and financial support from the international community for the acceleration of implementation of national programmes in accordance with outcomes of global conferences/summits.

ECLAC

151. ECLAC has undertaken a variety of activities to support member countries in addressing these emerging issues. ECLAC's integrated approach favouring a multisectoral analysis of the issues involved governed most of the activities of the commission. However, when needed, specific attention was given to environmental, population, social, gender or human settlements issues.

152. The main activities undertaken and meetings organized by ECLAC included the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, Lima, Peru, 8 to 10 February 2000, which adopted the Lima Consensus (E/CN.6/2000/PC/10, annex I); and the Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development for the region convened jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ECLAC with the support of UNDP, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States (OAS) in January 2000 in Santiago, Chile. The five-year review and appraisal of the implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development[15] showed that progress had been made in several areas, but that some obstacles remained. The review and appraisal identified the priorities for action in the coming years towards the full realization of the goals adopted in Cairo. This regional consensus, prepared with active participation of several regional non-governmental organizations and in close collaboration with UNFPA, constituted an important contribution of the region to the global preparatory activities for the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly to review and

appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, New York, 30 June-2 July 1999; and the Urban Indicators Programme, as part of the Global Urban Observatory supported by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) regional office and ECLAC, and applied in Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Barbados.

ECA

153. To help the countries in the region respond to the challenges relating to the follow-up to the global conferences, ECA has adopted a three-pronged approach that consists of undertaking policy research to highlight key concerns or issues to member States, organizing policy forums for the sharing of experiences and best practices, and providing technical assistance to member States to support the implementation of the programmes of action of the various global conferences.

154. ECA has undertaken a wide range of studies to highlight the key issues or priorities of member States in the follow-up to the global conferences. Thus, for example, a study on the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa presented to the first meeting of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development revealed that in designing and implementing environmental policies and programmes, African countries had placed emphasis, in a descending order of importance, on issues of land-use planning, biological diversity, use of forests, climate change, sustainable agriculture, hazardous wastes, desertification and drought, solid wastes management and toxic waste.

155. A study presented to the Sixth Regional Conference on Women in Africa organized by ECA in November 1999 evaluated the progress made in the implementation of critical areas of concern identified in the Dakar Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.2) and Beijing Platform for Action. Forty-three of the 53 countries in the region participated in the national evaluation surveys on the achievements and constraints in the critical areas of the Platforms for Action. The 12 areas of concern were ranked by countries in terms of their priority, in descending order of importance, as follows: poverty was ranked first by 41 countries; education was ranked next by 39 countries; health was ranked third by 39 countries; human rights was ranked fourth by 34 countries; and women in decision-making and violence against women were ranked fifth and sixth, respectively. Institutions, economy, media, environment, the girl child and conflict were ranked from seventh to twelfth.

156. Mobilization of resources for social development is one of the main commitments of the World Summit for Social Development. An analysis by ECA in its 1999 Economic Report on Africa revealed that, on average, an African country spent in 1999 only 3.6 per cent of its GDP on education and 1.6 per cent of GDP on health. There was considerable variation across countries, with the minimum spent on education having been 0.9 per cent of GDP and the maximum 6.7 per cent of GDP. For health, the figures were 0.2 per cent of GDP and 2.9 per cent of GDP respectively.

157. ECA and UNFPA collaborated in preparing a report that documented the experience of African countries in the implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development[16] and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The report highlighted achievements and best practices in African countries in the areas of reproductive health and reproductive rights; family, youth and adolescents; gender equality, equity, empowerment of women and male involvement; the role of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in programme implementation; population policy and development strategies; and advocacy and information, education and communication (IEC) strategies. Among some of the most notable best practices in these areas are the establishment of community-based distribution centres for non-prescriptive contraceptives in some countries; the establishment of special programmes either in school or out of school to meet the needs of adolescents; and the development of national plans of actions that specifically address the issues of women's empowerment in several countries, especially promoting women's equal participation in the labour force. The study on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was disseminated to policy makers and presented for discussion at the follow-up committee on the implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the

International Conference on Population and Development.

158. Convening policy forums for sharing experiences and disseminating best practices has been an important tool in supporting the efforts of African Governments in the follow-up to the global conferences. Thus, ECA has organized subregional follow-up conferences to review progress in the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition, it convened an international conference on the theme of African women and economic empowerment: investing in our future, in April 1998, and the sixth regional conference on African women in November 1999 to provide an in-depth assessment in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The issues relating to the follow-up to Agenda 21 and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) were discussed at the first meeting of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development, held in 1999. The Committee provides policy guidance with respect to the interrelated issues of population, environment, human settlements and food security. Matters relating to the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development were discussed at the third Meeting of the Regional Follow-up Committee on the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

159. As noted earlier, various analytical studies undertaken by ECA were presented for discussion at these meetings convened by ECA. While the analytical research studies have contributed to increasing the awareness of policy makers on issues that need to be addressed, the deliberations in the various policy forums have enabled member States to renew their collective commitment to and resolve towards the goals of the global conferences.

160. Technical assistance to member States of the region for the follow-up to the global conferences has taken a variety of forms. It has included support for countries in developing their national plans of action for implementation of goals of the global conferences and support for capacity-building, especially for the national institutional structures entrusted with the follow-up of the global conferences. ECA has also encouraged and supported member States with respect to adopting an integrated approach to some of the goals of the global conferences. Thus, for example, it has developed the Population-Environment–Development-Agriculture (PEDA) model which helps member States to analyse and understand the consequences of the policy options available to address specific issues in one or more of the areas of population, agriculture and environment. The PEDA model is being customized for use by more member States.

ESCWA

161. The role of ESCWA in the conference follow-up process at the regional level included the following: (a) providing a regional forum where member States discussed, compared and analysed their situations and their efforts, including tools and methodologies developed for the implementation of recommendations of global conferences, as well as for exchanging information and experiences, developing strategies and future key actions, and enhancing the mechanism of governments, *inter alia*, for partnership with civil society; and (b) organizing the Arab Conference on Integrated Regional Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences and a round-table discussion on 4 and 5 October in Beirut, where cross-cutting themes and methodological issues were discussed, and country reports on implementation and follow-up were presented.

162. The objective of the round-table discussion was to clarify the concept of partnership between Governments and civil society in the Arab region as a tool for improving the follow-up process to United Nations global conferences. The participants included government representatives, scholars from universities and research institutions, United Nations and regional organizations, independent experts, the media, non-governmental organizations and civil societies. Future meetings will be held to discuss particular themes for the follow-up process and to encourage more free discussions between Governments and civil society. The next round-table discussion will be on capacity-building of non-governmental organizations.

163. The objective of the Arab Conference on Integrated Regional Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences was to assess and evaluate the status of implementation, to suggest further action to be taken, and to discuss the mechanisms used for implementation and follow-up, especially with regard to common concerns addressed by the global

conferences. The conference provided ESCWA with an opportunity to review and to consolidate the findings of the national reports, and other relevant reports, such as the common country assessments (CCA), that include and identify national priorities, strategies and challenges in the fields of social development. In addition, the outcome of discussions at the Conference gave member States and ESCWA and its partners a better overview on developments in the region on issues of follow-up.

164. ESCWA produced several studies on poverty measurement and situation analysis in 1998 and in 1999, which show that poverty remains a major problem in many countries of the Arab region, one that requires intervention by Governments and civil society. Future plans include conducting more policy-oriented research on the issue of poverty and providing training to national personnel on the appropriate tools and approaches on poverty reduction.

165. The study on the social development situation and trends in the Arab region revealed that there is no consensus among member States on indicators to be used to evaluate and monitor follow-up on the impact of implementation at the regional level. This issue was discussed extensively during the Arab Conference when it was agreed that comparative research is needed for the development of additional indicators. Future activities include selection and computation of indicators from available data at the national level, and the preparation of a training workshop for national personnel on these social indicators.

166. ESCWA, as a multidisciplinary United Nations entity in its structure, programmes and technical expertise, is well placed to undertake the integrated follow-up actions and to report on the implementation status of cross-cutting themes and goals of conferences, in support of the efforts of Governments. It produces regional support products, such as guidelines, databases and specific project proposals, to enable member States to implement efficiently and effectively the recommendations of the global conferences, especially the cross-cutting themes. In this respect, ESCWA embarked on developing a Guide/Easy-user Manual for Implementation and Follow-up to Global Conferences. The draft guide was presented in the Arab Conference on Regional Integrated Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences where it was extensively discussed. ESCWA also initiated a quantitative and textual database on social development in which indicators are linked with the policies of social development. A prototype of the database was prepared and presented in the above-mentioned Arab Conference. Both the Guide and the database drafts were well received by Governments and civil society organizations in view of the need at the national level for such tools, and member countries in general expressed support and willingness to provide assistance for the development of these materials.

167. ESCWA also plays an advocacy role for promoting and raising awareness of relevant development issues and the necessary action to be taken. In this regard, ESCWA carries, produces and disseminates information material about the process of implementation and follow-up and for promoting the cross-cutting issues and the recommendations of the global conferences. The material produced included: (a) an information desk-type brochure on the most relevant cross-cutting issues for the Arab region context in the plans of action of the global conferences (poverty reduction, empowerment of the family as a social unit, protection of the environment, empowerment of women and gender equality, and population movement); (b) a Web page highlighting the goals and activities of the integrated regional follow-up by Arab States to global conferences project as well as disseminating information related to recommendations of the conferences and to the impact of their implementation on improving the quality of life in the Arab countries; and (c) a Newsletter to disseminate information on best practices and success stories by Governments, civil societies and United Nations agencies on follow-up activities in the Arab States.

168. The dissemination of information material increased awareness about and interest in the integrated regional follow-up project, and the cross-cutting issues it addresses, as well as the activities implemented under it in the region. In addition, the Gender Media Campaign, launched by ESCWA in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University, aims to raise awareness of policy makers and the public about gender issues through television spots.

3. Complementarity of roles and activities with other United Nations organizations

ECE

169. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting was organized with the cooperation of four major partners

that are most active in the region on the themes addressed, namely, UNDP, UNIFEM, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, and on the bases of their respective areas of competence. UNDP and UNIFEM provided financial support which made it possible for a large number of non-governmental organizations from ECE countries with economies in transition to be present.

170. ECE regularly coordinates activities relating to human settlements in the ECE region and recently participated in a UNEP Balkan task force (as part of a team dealing with human settlements and land administration issues). Substantive participation in inter-agency meetings and regular contacts with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) are maintained, in particular in order to keep them informed on the preparation of the ECE ministerial meeting which will provide inputs to the five-year review of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) process.

171. The streamlining of the United Nations work on the environment in the region is secured by annual coordination meetings between ECE and the UNEP Regional Office for Europe. Also, the day-to-day cooperation has increased in terms of projects, workshops and frequent contacts between experts. The Protocol on Water and Health is a result of this cooperation between ECE and WHO/Europe. The cooperation with UNDP has proved to be most fruitful on the country level and in subregional projects. Activities of other bodies such as the European Union (EU), OECD, the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) task force, UNEP, the Council of Europe, and Baltic Agenda 21 are fully taken into account.

172. UNFPA continues to be the main partner of ECE for initiating a new programme of activities as a follow-up to the five-year review of the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development. Along with the other regional commissions, ECE took part in the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. ECE also collaborated with the Global Population Information Network (POPIN) Project with a view to setting up new national POPIN sites in countries in transition.

ESCAP

173. ESCAP organized the regional review meetings in follow-up to global conferences/summits in cooperation with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Regular consultations that were held with these entities, *inter alia*, at the sessions of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) and its subcommittees and task forces have fostered active cooperation and collaboration, and enhanced complementarity of roles and activities between ESCAP and other United Nations organizations, while minimizing duplication of efforts. Collaboration in the implementation of joint projects has also been promoted by ESCAP.

ECLAC

174. Most of the above-mentioned activities and other initiatives converging towards the preparatory processes of the global conferences were organized in collaboration with other United Nations organizations. Wide and strong collaboration took place with those involved in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the countries participating in the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity[17] and protocol on biosafety, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[18] and the Kyoto Protocol thereto[19] and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II). Joint activities were undertaken with UNDP to develop instruments for environmental management in the region. The Forum of Ministers of the Environment was supported by an Inter-agency Technical Committee whose members are UNEP, UNDP, ECLAC, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

175. The regional consensus on population and development was prepared in collaboration with UNFPA and several analytical studies by UNFPA, UNIFEM, ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO and the World Food Programme (WFP) were submitted to the Regional Conference on Women.

ECA

176. Various agencies of the United Nations system have actively collaborated with ECA in the

implementation of the activities relating to the follow-up to the global conferences. The range of collaboration has included funding, establishing a joint secretariat for servicing meetings for the follow-up process and preparing joint studies.

177. UNDP, UNIFEM and UNFPA provided funding to ECA for organizing the subregional follow-up meetings on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the International Conference on African Women and Economic Empowerment: Investing in Our Future, held in April 1998, and the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, held in November 1999. UNFPA has collaborated with ECA in co-organizing several regional conferences, most notably the preparatory meetings for the International Conference on Population and Development and its mid-decade review. ECA, OAU and UNFPA form the joint secretariat for the regional Follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

178. ECA is currently working with the Regional Office for Africa of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in the preparations for the five-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held in Addis Ababa in 2000. A joint secretariat including ECA, UNEP, OAU and the African Development Bank are collaborating in undertaking the preparatory work for the 10-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other issues relating to the implementation of Agenda 21.

ESCWA

179. The steering committee established for the integrated regional follow-up project includes representatives of the League of Arab States and all United Nations regional agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, WHO, UNFPA and UNIDO). The Committee also includes ECA which represents the Arab countries in North Africa.

180. During the round-table discussion and the Arab Conference, United Nations agencies presented reports on their experiences on partnership and follow-up issues and lessons learned were discussed with all participants. Since the Arab Conference, UNICEF in cooperation with ESCWA has been conducting the regional 10-year review of the World Summit for Children in preparation for the next summit meeting in February 2001. The process was initiated in March 2000 and it is planned that an Expert Group Meeting for the Children's Summit will be held in June 2000. This initiative also led to further discussion on other joint activities. Other regional United Nations entities and agencies such as UNFPA and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) are cooperating with ESCWA and coordinating efforts in this regard.

4. Problems and issues for follow-up; priorities for further action

ECE

181. Following the regional preparatory meeting on the five-year appraisal of the outcome of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, steps are being taken for securing financial support for developing gender mainstreaming activities in a number of areas in countries with economies in transition, within the ECE mandate.

182. The fact that future activities of the human settlements programme of ECE will address, in particular, practical experiences in environmentally sound management of local transport and land-use planning may lead to a substantial reduction in the negative impact on human health, natural resources and environment.

183. ECE activities in the field of environment will continue to focus on the strengthening of the institutional capacity and competence of member countries mainly through exchange of experiences and advisory assistance for the effective implementation of and compliance with the regional legal instruments developed by ECE. Another major direction for further action will encompass the review of environmental priorities and promotion of policy instruments to prevent and reverse environmental degradation by fully integrating environmental considerations into sectoral policies.

184. In the field of population, further action will be undertaken for implementing the key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,[20] particularly in countries with economies in transition. Activities will consist of

collection and processing of data, analysis and research, national capacity-building, including training, and information networking, focusing on behaviour and status of men and women of different generations.

ESCAP

185. In the field of social development, follow-up actions need to be taken at national and international levels. Such follow-up action is needed to: increase continued support for poverty alleviation, income- and employment-generation and social integration including the provision of income and related support for the poor and to the informal sector; strengthen governance and accelerate the decentralization process; continue strengthening of partnerships between government and civil society including the media and deepen recognition of the fact that the task of eradicating poverty is not the responsibility of Governments alone but is shared by all sectors in the economy and society; accelerate capacity-building at all levels, to make social development a self-sustaining process; plan and implement population and social programmes that take into account the dynamic demographic, economic, political, environmental and technological framework and maximize benefits from advances in information and communications technology; and establish monitoring and evaluation systems for all policy interventions.

186. In the field of environment and development, ESCAP will pursue the regional implementation of Agenda 21, the decisions of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly held in June 1997 and will provide support to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In this effort, it will involve countries of the region in the development of a regional action programme for 2001-2005 with a focus on the targeted and critical environmental issues addressing air and water quality, domestic and industrial wastes, water resource management for clean and adequate supply, protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, appropriate development of land resources, desertification control, coastal environmental issues, climate change and sustainable energy development to promote conservation and efficiency including the use of renewable energy. The core activities will include capacity development at the national level, regional cooperation and the involvement of stakeholders in government, civil societies and the business sector. Education and awareness on the environment are crucial for achieving tangible results for which ESCAP will continue to work closely with the media and non-governmental organizations.

187. In the field of women and development, the following have been identified as priorities for further action in the Asian and Pacific region: the political and economic empowerment of women, following a rights-based approach and specific strategies; concerted measures to counter the negative effects of the slowdown in growth rates in many countries of the region, particularly on female labour force participation; promotion of universal awareness of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development — and the fundamental freedoms of women and children, including the girl child, through comprehensive gender-sensitive human rights education and legal literacy programmes; legal reform including constitutional provisions on gender equality and the use of affirmative action policies, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Women's Convention)[21] and other human rights treaties; mobilization of resources and support for innovative non-governmental organizations and individuals engaged in women's empowerment activities in critical areas of concern; and promotion of partnership and cooperation between Governments, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in Asia and the Pacific.

188. In the population field, the major challenge is to overcome the social and cultural barriers that sustain gender inequality and support the limited responsibility of men in matters related to reproductive health. There is a need for programmatic strategies to target youth in programmes of education about the practice of responsible sexual relations and male participation in family planning. Major challenges remain in providing adolescents and youths with reproductive health services. In many countries, a policy framework is needed for issues related to adolescents, including legislation related to age at marriage, access to reproductive health information and services, and child prostitution and sexual abuse. Constraints remain on forging a more effective partnership between the non-governmental sector and government. Constraints also exist on the taking advantage of expanded opportunities by groups in civil society. Some of these constraints are related to the perceptions of

Governments about the appropriate roles for institutions of civil society, while other constraints are related to the underdevelopment of civil society in many countries of the region as well as to human and financial factors.

189. In addition to the provision of technical and financial support to national Governments in the implementation of action programmes to address the key issues enumerated above, ESCAP's follow-up action would provide technical and financial assistance towards: improving understanding of the social impacts of, and identifying the appropriate social policy and programme responses to, financial crises; the strengthening of the legal and institutional framework; the establishment, operation and strengthening of social protection systems; preventing the spread of the HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases; and conducting social assessments in linking social policies with economic policies to ensure the simultaneous achievement of social and economic goals; development and standardization of social development indicators and continuous monitoring of progress in the attainment of the quantitative targets in the various sectors set up by the countries in the regional and global conferences; strengthening of regional and international cooperation and coordination in dealing with issues on drug trafficking, trafficking of women and children, migrant workers, refugees and displaced persons, transnational organized crime and environmental problems while strengthening regional and subregional efforts such as those by ASEAN and SAARC in pursuing the goals of social development; and mainstreaming of social development concerns in programming and evaluating ODA.

ECLAC

190. Although there are specific issues concerning each of the world conferences and summits, the outcome of all have demonstrated the need to develop an integrated approach in which priority should be given to equity, citizenship and development as three dimensions of sustainable development. The need to continue working within an integrated framework allowing the making of linkages between sectoral development issues on one hand, and regional and global issues on the other, has been emphasized. The struggle against poverty as a part of sustainable economic growth was seen as a major priority requiring social integration and empowerment of excluded groups. New institutional arrangements including decentralization and development of participatory institutions were considered a high priority.

ECA

191. The process of the follow-up to the global conferences has served both to underline the intricate linkages among the main themes of the various conferences and to reinforce the fact that meeting the challenge of development requires a comprehensive approach. Indeed, the problems that African countries have encountered in implementing the programmes of action of the global conferences broadly reflect the constraints they face in promoting development in the region.

192. As such, the priorities for further action in accelerating the process of implementing the goals of the global conferences overlap with those for fostering development in Africa. The first priority is building African countries' State capacity which is defined as the ability of the government to define its policies and design and implement the programmes to achieve the desired outcomes. The effects of prolonged conflicts in some countries and of economic crisis in others have contributed to the weakening of the capacity of the Governments in several African countries. Given that the government is the major actor in implementing the programmes of the global conferences, it is vital that support be provided for making the State more able to perform the tasks required to achieve the goals of the conferences.

193. A closely related priority is the funding of programmes designed to strengthen the capability of the State. Such programmes would centre on enhancing the administrative and technical capacity of public sector staff, especially those in the professional cadre as well as strengthening the institutions of governance, particularly those government institutions that are entrusted with the implementation of the goals of the global conferences. The African Governments clearly have a major responsibility in mobilizing resources for human and institutional capacity-building programmes in their countries. However, donor support towards national efforts remains very important. A third priority is the strengthening of international cooperation for development which should be reflected in increased ODA and significant debt relief to African countries. Enhanced international cooperation for development was meant to be a key element in achieving the goals

of the global conferences. This promise should be turned into reality in support of the efforts of African countries.

ESCWA

194. Some of the constraints to be addressed include the lack of information on some of the cross-cutting issues that require additional efforts for data collection and capacity-building of non-governmental organizations that are still in need of institutional and technical assistance to become effective partners with Governments.

195. Other constraints include sensitivities between non-governmental organizations and Governments arising upon the request of the non-governmental organizations to play a strong role in the follow-up process. Also the cultural constraints and political instability that restrain effective follow-up of advancement of women issues deserve priority attention.

B. Cooperation among the regional commissions

Trade facilitation United Nations/CEFACT

196. Trade facilitation activities in ECE are organized under the United Nations Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport (United Nations/CEFACT). Acknowledging that, in an increasingly global economy, it is essential for the success of trade facilitation to take into consideration the needs of all countries and to work closely with them, United Nations/CEFACT allows for the full participation of non-ECE countries and international organizations. While trade agreements, standards and conventions must often be global and widely implemented in order to be effective, the conditions under which they are implemented are often unique to a country, subregion or region owing to differences in available trade infrastructures, national legal systems and management practices. The regional commissions are thus in a unique position to work with United Nations/CEFACT to help to close the gap between local and global realities.

197. All five regional commissions participate in the work of United Nations/CEFACT. ECE, along with the other commissions, is currently exploring the possibilities of new methods for the introduction and implementation of trade facilitation techniques and electronic commerce in the different regions. In this connection, several joint expert group meetings and seminars have been carried out by ECE with ESCWA and ECA and all three commissions have agreed to carry out a workshop on trade facilitation at ECA headquarters to increase awareness about trade facilitation issues in the African region. ECLAC has long participated in raising awareness and is disseminating information on United Nations/CEFACT to many parties implementing trade facilitation in its region. ECE and ESCAP have also closely collaborated on certain trade facilitation issues leading to the issuance of training guides on electronic data interchange, and to the organization of joint seminars. ESCAP has also set up a mirror site of the ECE Trade Facilitation Information Exchange (TRAFIX) web site. The two commissions are also collaborating on trade facilitation issues in the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

Cooperation in the Mediterranean

198. At its last session, ECE recognized that additional efforts should be made to mobilize resources with a view to responding to the specific circumstances and needs of the Commission's Mediterranean countries. Following subsequent discussions among the Executive Secretaries of ECE, ECA and ESCWA, the Governments of the Mediterranean member countries of the three regions were invited to consider possibilities of pursuing joint activities for the benefit of their countries.

199. In response to this invitation, the Governments of Croatia, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Turkey informed the ECE secretariat of their priorities for cooperation in the ECE region, which included energy and energy efficiency; trade, including trade facilitation and free trade; environment, including air pollution and water; transport and customs; agriculture; training; statistics; harmonization of conventions and standards; and legislation.

200. As a result of further discussions in Bangkok in February 2000 between the Executive Secretaries concerned, project proposals are being prepared by ECE for further consideration and discussion among the three regional commissions in: solar applications and energy efficiency in buildings of the Mediterranean

countries; sustainable tourism; trade facilitation; promoting and assessing legal instruments for the management and protection of shared water resources; follow-up to an interregional action plan on transport issues drawn in the Cairo meeting of the Heads of the Transport Divisions of the Regional Commissions in December 1999 (see below).

Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

201. SPECA was developed jointly by ESCAP and ECE at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) that are member of both commissions. The programme, established by the Tashkent Declaration of 26 March 1998 (A/53/96, annex II), seeks to strengthen subregional cooperation among the member countries concerned and facilitate their economic integration into Europe and Asia. It is envisaged that SPECA will be "*à géométrie variable*" (of variable geometry) which would allow for some projects to be implemented on a subregional basis, while the geographical coverage of other projects will be extended to include countries outside the subregion, particularly neighbouring countries.

202. Project working groups (PWGs) have already been established in the areas of (a) transport infrastructure and border-crossing facilities (lead country: Kazakhstan); (b) rational and efficient use of energy and water resources (lead country: Kyrgyzstan); and (c) an international economic conference on Tajikistan, a joint regional development strategy and promotion of foreign investment (lead country: Tajikistan).

203. The other two PWGs on "Regional cooperation in the development of multiple routes for pipeline transportation of hydrocarbons to global markets (lead country: Turkmenistan)" and on "Restructuring of manufacturing industries with a view to creating internationally competitive enterprises (lead country: Uzbekistan)" are not yet operational.

204. A meeting of Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central Asian States took place on 8 and 9 December 1999 in Almaty where the concept paper on SPECA was discussed and is now pending formal adoption by the participating States. It was also recommended that the presentation of SPECA to the world community should take place in the first half of 2000.

Cooperation within the SPECA project on rational and efficient use of energy and water resources

205. In addition to ECE/ESCAP cooperation within the SPECA project on rational and efficient use of energy and water resources, ECE and ESCAP are considering cooperation for a demonstration zone for energy efficiency, to be established in the far east of the Russian Federation within the framework of a United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) project.

Guideline for energy conservation laws for economies in transition

206. ESCAP and ECE are preparing a Guideline for energy conservation laws for economies in transition, including the Russian Federation and selected countries of Central Asia, which is now ready for publication.

ECE/ESCWA cooperation in the field of agricultural standards

207. In 1999, the secretariat and Chairman of ECE's Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development participated and lectured at an expert group meeting in Beirut indicating possibilities on how ECE standards could be used in the ESCWA region. Twenty-five ECE standards have been translated into Arabic and circulated to the member countries. A follow-up meeting concentrating on standards for meat and seeds is planned for autumn 2000.

ECLAC/ESCAP interregional cooperation in trade and investment

208. ESCAP in cooperation with ECLAC organized a brainstorming Seminar on Interregional Cooperation in Trade and Investment: Asia-Latin America, at Bangkok in February 2000, to promote trade and investment between Asia and Latin America. The Seminar identified various obstacles contributing to the low levels of trade and investment between the two regions. It also made recommendations on how to promote interregional economic activity. The participants agreed to continue the process of interregional cooperation initiated in the seminar with increased

involvement of the private sector. The focus of the next meeting would be on the role of SMEs in promoting interregional trade and investment flows.

Meeting of ECE and ESCAP with the Government of Bangladesh

209. ECE and ESCAP held together two consultative meetings with the Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka on the legal and regulatory framework for private investment in infrastructure and on providing a negotiating platform to assist civil servants in negotiating balanced concession agreements with foreign investors. Such agreements would allow projects to proceed with little or no capital expenditure by the host Government and could have the effect of easing the debt burden of Bangladesh and releasing public resources for poverty alleviation. ECE will continue with this cooperation by, *inter alia*, bringing two representatives of that Government to Geneva to attend the ECE's International Forum on Public-Private Partnerships in December 2000. The Forum will give the Government of Bangladesh an opportunity to showcase their projects to foreign investors.

Transport and communications

210. A meeting of the heads of transport and communications of the regional commissions was held from 7 to 9 December 1999 in Cairo, and was hosted by the Ministry of Transport of the Government of Egypt and ECA. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Governments of Egypt and Morocco. The purpose of the meeting was to initiate a dialogue among the five secretariats of the regional commissions with a view to (a) identifying possible interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages and to draw up an action plan in order to assist their respective member countries in achieving full participation in the rapidly globalizing economy; and (b) identifying a number of other areas where cooperation could be developed among the regional commissions to share each other's experiences for the benefit of their respective member countries.

211. Member States have already given important mandates to the regional commissions to promote intraregional and interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages. Since the beginning of these regional initiatives, considerable progress has been achieved despite the wide differences in the pace of implementation. The meeting was of the view that all these would benefit from more effective interregional linkages and, accordingly, identified several potential interregional transport links that could be undertaken. It also identified a number of other areas for cooperation where experience could be shared, such as commercialization/privatization of transport infrastructure and operations; establishment of inland container depots (ICDs); and financing of road maintenance. Concrete ideas have been put together in a five-year draft action plan (2001-2006).

212. The action plan is to be implemented by undertaking a series of technical studies that will: (a) assess the traffic potential along the links tentatively identified; (b) review the facilitation measures in use at the border, the condition of links, and the gauge difference in the railways; and (c) identify the most promising corridors for interregional movement as well as physical and non-physical barriers that need to be removed.

213. The programme will also contribute to further strengthening the national capacities by organizing training activities to upgrade the skills on how to approach network identification/development and address the issue of physical and non-physical impediments to the movement of goods, and passengers both by road and rail. In addition, experience-sharing in identified areas among the countries of various regions will be promoted.

214. The Executive Secretaries agreed that the chiefs of transport of the regional commissions should meet once a year to pursue the initiative already taken, and that the next meeting would be hosted by ESCWA in January 2001. They also decided to submit a project proposal for implementation of the action plan, for funding under the United Nations Development Account for the period 2002-2003.

Public information meeting

215. A meeting of the Public Information Officers of the Regional Commissions was organized by the Regional Commissions New York Office (RCNYO) at Headquarters in New York, on 2 and 3 March 2000. The objective of the meeting was to share experiences in this area in order to further improve the commissions' public information strategies within the regions in respect of their work and the work of the United Nations as a whole. The Public Information Officers of the Regional Commissions met with

representatives of the media and relevant non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations, and held joint Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat/regional commissions meetings for consideration of issues of common interest, in particular, the preparations for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations.

216. The meeting was also organized back to back with a Department of Public Information-sponsored meeting of United Nations Information Centres, held at Headquarters on 6 and 7 March 2000, in which the Public Information Officers of the Regional Commissions also participated.

IV. Further measures undertaken by the commissions since spring 1999 to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency

217. In its resolution 1998/46, annex III, the Economic and Social Council welcomed the reform measures undertaken by the commissions and encouraged them to undertake further efforts to achieve greater focus, effectiveness and efficiency. The present section provides the Council with information on recent initiatives undertaken during the period under review.

ECE

218. As a follow-up to the reform, ECE adopted, at its 1999 session, a revised system of priority-setting to be applied during the budget submission year by all PSBs for their respective programmes of work. The revised system is being applied for the first time in 2000 and the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work will meet by the end of the year in order to make recommendations on the overall direction of ECE work and the distribution of resources among the main areas of ECE activity.

219. Furthermore, following a senior management retreat held in 1999, it was decided to launch a process of internal reflection on two broad areas. The first consists of strategic thinking on how ECE can (a) respond to demands emerging from new developments in the region or at the global level; (b) better integrate analytical, normative and operational activities; (c) develop a multisectoral approach to solving problems of a multidimensional nature; and (d) enhance its role as a regional arm for United Nations global activities. (A conference paper on this strategic reflection was circulated at the Commission session in May 2000.) The second area relates to the ways and means to improve communication, staff development, the working environment and administrative processes within the ECE secretariat.

ESCAP

220. Pursuant to the mandate by the Commission at its fifty-fifth session, the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) reconvened its Open-ended Informal Working Group, from June 1999 to March 2000, to assist the work of ACPR in addressing the areas of concern requiring immediate action within the context of the ongoing reform of ESCAP. The work of the Working Group focused on (a) strengthening the implementation of mandates and effectiveness of related activities; (b) improving the process of review of the activities of ESCAP; (c) improving the visibility of the work and activities of the Commission; and (d) strengthening cooperation with other United Nations bodies and entities.

221. The Working Group identified a set of proposals for further action pertaining to those four areas, including: the need to ensure that activities in the programme of work should be related to specific mandates that have continuing relevance, add value and avoid duplicating efforts while strengthening collaboration with them; active involvement of member and associate member Governments in consideration and reprioritization of mandated activities; active assistance by member and associate member Governments in setting criteria and providing feedback for the assessment and evaluation of activities; optimizing the use of the ESCAP web page in demonstrating the visibility of its work; and enhancing the effectiveness of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) and its subcommittees.

ECLAC

222. At the end of 1998, a meeting of the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group established pursuant to resolution 553 (XXVI)[22] undertook the priority-setting exercise for the programme of work that is currently under execution. The outcome of that meeting was a generalized increase in priorities for all categories of outputs of the ECLAC regular programme of work for the biennium 2000-2001.

223. Since then, another such meeting of the Group took place at the United Nations Headquarters in July 1999, to provide strategic guidance to the Commission in the context of the reform process of the United Nations system. That meeting also served as the opportunity for Latin American and Caribbean Governments to thoroughly review the work of the Commission in such designated high-priority areas as go beyond the formal boundaries of the regular programme of work such as the environment, natural disasters, finance for development and the regional follow-up to global conferences. Most of these activities are either partially financed with extrabudgetary resources or financed through the reallocation of existing regular resources while the overall financial scenario for the Commission shrinks over time.

224. At its XXVII session, the Commission requested the Ad Hoc Working Group to continue collaborating with the Executive Secretary in determining priority areas of the programme of work and in the debate and analysis of strategic directions for future activities of the Commission, bearing in mind the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean.[23]

ECA

225. ECA undertook a number of initiatives during the past year to achieve greater programme focus and enhance its effectiveness and operational efficiency. These measures, which are an integral part of deepening the reforms at ECA, with a view to improving the quality and impact of its work, have encompassed both substantive and administrative reform dimensions. Among the substantive initiatives were the launching of the African Development Forum (ADF) series and the Mano River Basin Initiative.

226. The main administrative reforms at the secretariat have centred on the consolidation of programme support divisions of the secretariat, with the number of programme support divisions reduced from three to two. This reflected the recognition that significant efficiencies could be gained in terms of bringing together related management functions for enhanced interface and synergy. Thus, an Office for Planning and Resource Management has been created which will bring together the related functions of policy coordination, programme development and monitoring, budget and finance, human resource management, technical assistance coordination and evaluation. The Office will plan, develop, direct and administer new policies, strategies and procedures for leveraging overall organizational performance and enhancing management accountability.

227. The Conference and General Services Division (CGSD) will be responsible for the Conference and Translation Services, the General Services Section (GSS), the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), the Building Management Unit (BMU), the Security and Safety Unit and the Security Plan Office. In addition, the Information Services Section (ISS) will now be part of CGSD. The Division will continue to develop a more efficient, cost-effective and responsive conference planning and management service; enhance timeliness and quality in the support services in general and in procurement, relating to shipping, travel and protocol in particular; develop a service-minded, well-trained and well-equipped Security and Safety Unit; create an efficient and well-maintained work environment; and enable each staff member to have access to adequate information technology capabilities.

ESCWA

228. ESCWA had launched substantive reform initiative as early as 1994 and had concluded this aspect in 1997. However, the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to ensure further complementarity between normative and operational activities came into effect in 1999, by merging the former Technical Cooperation Division and the Programme Planning and Coordination Unit into one division, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division.

229. Additional measures in 1999 for furthering the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission

focused on human resources development through upgrading staff skills, particularly in computer literacy; the adoption of the integrated management information system (IMIS) for improved management in the areas of personnel, finance, procurement and travel; the establishment of the United Nations House in Beirut, which now houses five other United Nations agencies, including the consequent savings accrued from the provision of common services and cost-sharing; and improvement of information technology and communication through the upgrading of computer hardware, expanding software applications, upgrading communication capacities and launching a project on the year 2000 computer problem (Y2K).

V. Report of the Executive Secretaries

230. The Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions met on 19 and 20 July 1999, 29 and 30 September 1999, 13 and 14 February 2000 and 10 and 11 May 2000, in conjunction with meetings of the Economic and Social Council, and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, and the tenth session of UNCTAD. At those four meetings, the Executive Secretaries exchanged views on development issues, as they related to their respective regions, that warranted cooperation among the regional commissions and with other relevant partners within and outside the United Nations system.

231. The Executive Secretaries considered that the recent phase of financial turmoil had generated a deep sense in favour of fundamental reforms in the international financial architecture to improve the management of financial crises, as well as to prevent other recurrence of similar crises in future. The crisis had, indeed, led to a recognition that there was an enormous discrepancy between the sophisticated and dynamic financial world and the institutions that regulated it, and that "existing institutions are inadequate to deal with financial globalization".[24] Accordingly, they welcomed General Assembly resolution 54/197, in which the Assembly stressed the need further to define the role and improve the capacities of the international, regional and subregional financial institutions with regard to the prevention, management and resolution in a timely and effective manner of international financial crises, encouraged efforts to enhance the stabilizing role of regional and subregional financial institutions and arrangements in supporting the management of monetary and financial issues, in accordance with the mandate of each institution, and requested the regional commissions to provide their views on this matter to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session through their regular reports to the Economic and Social Council.

232. The fairly rapid though incomplete normalization of capital markets could give way to a sense of complacency that might slow down the reform effort and prevent seizing this opportunity to broaden its agenda and setting in motion a representative, balanced negotiation process. They felt therefore that the agenda should be broadened in at least two senses: first, it should go beyond the issues of financial crisis prevention and resolution (which might be termed the "narrow" financial architecture) to include those associated with development finance and the "ownership" of economic and, particularly, development policies; and, second, it should consider, in a systematic fashion, the role not only of world institutions, but also of regional arrangements and the areas where national autonomy should be maintained.

233. There are at least three arguments in support of a strong role for regional institutions in the new financial order. The first one is that globalization also entails open regionalism. The growth of intraregional trade and direct investment flows are, indeed, striking features of the ongoing globalization process. This factor increases macroeconomic linkages and thus the demands for certain services provided by the international financial system — macroeconomic surveillance and internalization of the externalities that national macroeconomic policies have on neighbouring countries, and mutual surveillance of each other's mechanisms for the prudential regulation and supervision of the financial system — and the regional effects of potential debt standstills and workout procedures.

234. Secondly, some of these services may be subject to diseconomies of scale and it is unclear whether others have the strong scale economies to justify single international institutions in specific areas. Traditional issues of subsidiarity are thus raised. For example, macroeconomic consultation and surveillance at the world level may be necessary to guarantee policy coherence among major industrialized countries, but it would certainly be inefficient to manage the externalities generated by macroeconomic policies on neighbours in the developing world (or even within

Europe). Owing to differences in legal traditions and the sheer scale of the diseconomies involved, surveillance of national systems for the prudential regulation and supervision of financial sectors, and even the definition of specific minimum standards in this area, may be dealt with more appropriately with the support of regional institutions. Development finance can operate effectively at different scales and can perform certain functions at regional and subregional levels that could not be performed at the international level. Also, although regional and international contagion implies that the management of the largest balance-of-payments crises should be assigned to a single world institution, it is unclear how far this assertion should be pushed. Strong regional institutions can serve as regional buffers, as the post-war Western European experience indicates. Regional reserve funds can also play a useful role in the developing world and, if expanded, could even provide full support to the small and medium-sized countries within some regions. Also, as the rising concentration of balance-of-payments support in a few countries indicates, the fact that there may be biases in the response of the international community according to the size of the country, would argue for a division of labour in the provision of services in this area between world and regional organizations.

235. The third argument is that, for smaller countries, the access to a broader menu of alternatives to manage a crisis or to finance development is relatively more important than the "global public goods" that the largest international organizations provide (for example, global macroeconomic stability) and upon which they will assume they have little or no influence (that is to say, they have the attitude of "free riders"). Owing to their small size, their negotiation power vis-à-vis large organizations would be very limited, and their most important defence is therefore competition in the provision to them of financial services from such institutions.

236. There may be a fourth, political economy argument: countries are likely to take quite different attitudes to the analyses made by international and regional organizations (and in the attached conditionality). They are probably more likely to "own" the latter, as they feel they have a stronger voice in the analyses made by regional organizations, a fact that will improve rather than reduce effectiveness. The fear that this may lead to lax arrangements is unwarranted, as the proposal to create and strengthen regional financial institutions entails financial commitments by developing countries to provide the capital for the corresponding reserve funds and development banks, a fact that will lead the countries to closely monitor the soundness of their activities. Indeed, the supply of capital will be the single most important restriction to the growth of these regional financial networks. The fact that many of these institutions will raise money in the market will provide an additional means of control over their operations.

237. The current discussion has underscored the fact that some services provided by international financial institutions, including some "global public goods", are being undersupplied. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this statement that the increasing supply should come from a few world organizations. Rather, the organizational structure should have, in some cases, the nature of networks of institutions that provide the services required on a complementary basis and should function, in others, as a system of competitive organizations. The provision of the services required for financial crisis prevention and management should be closer to the first model, whereas, in the realm of development finance, competition should be the basic rule (and, in fact, should include competition with private agents as well). However, purity in the model's structure is probably not the best characteristic: it is desirable that parts of networks compete against each other (for example, regional reserve funds versus the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the provision of emergency financing) and that competitive organizations cooperate in some cases.

238. This implies that IMF of the future should not be viewed as a single, global institution, but rather as the apex of a network of regional and subregional reserve funds. This model should be extended to the provision of macroeconomic consultation and surveillance, as well as to coordination and surveillance of national systems of prudential regulation and supervision complementing, rather than substituting for, regular IMF surveillance. It is important to emphasize that, aside from other functions, subregional development banks can play a significant role as a mechanism for pooling the risks of groups of developing countries, thus allowing them to make a more aggressive use of opportunities provided by private capital markets.

239. An institutional framework such as that suggested would have two positive features. First of all, it may

help to bring more stability to the world economy by providing essential services that can hardly be provided by a few international institutions, particularly in the face of a dynamic process of open regionalism. Secondly, from the point of view of the equilibrium of world relations, it would be more balanced than a system based on a few world organizations. This would increase the commitment of less powerful players to abide by rules that contribute to world and regional stability.

Globalization and regionalism

240. At their meeting in Bangkok on 13 and 14 February 2000, the Executive Secretaries considered the issue of globalization, regionalism and development, in response to the invitation of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD requesting their participation in an interactive debate with him on the subject at the tenth session of UNCTAD. The papers, which are to be published by UNCTAD, and the ensuing debate reflected an interest in linking global and regional approaches on complex issues, since convergences or divergences between regions help to better understand the phenomenon at stake. While there are significant disparities in the relative speed of regionalization and globalization, convergences are strong on the fact that globalization is not an obstacle as long as the conditions are met to make globalization an engine for the development of all countries. A summary overview below synthesizes some of the main findings around these issues.

241. With respect to regionalization and development, Europe and Latin America intraregional trade is more dynamic than trade with other regions. From this point of view, it could be said that we are witnessing more regionalization than globalization. In Europe the same is true for FDI (55 per cent of Western European FDI remains in Europe) and it is interesting to note that trade liberalization and stable monetary conditions in Latin America also contributed in recent years to intraregional investments, which, although modest in terms of volume (about 5 per cent of total of foreign investment flowing into the region), are significant given their dynamism and their contribution to regional integration. At the end of the 1990s, the Asian crisis and the deterioration of the economic situation in Japan slowed down the pace of Asian regional integration, which nevertheless is significant, with intra-Asian trade representing about 40 per cent of the total trade of the region. On the other side, in Africa and West Asia, intraregional trade declined in the past decade from an already very low level.

242. The reasons for these differences are to be found in the structure of exports and in the impact of subregional arrangements. They reflect well the nature of development in each region. Commodity exporting countries are dependent on the production and export of a few primary products whose share of world trade is declining and which are becoming increasingly less important in today's knowledge-based global economy. Since the majority of people are employed in the commodity producing sectors, poverty is perpetrated by the secular decline in the demand for these commodities. The energy exporting countries, while benefiting from a relatively less unfavourable evolution of prices, are also affected by their fluctuation and by the weak multiplier effect of commodity earnings on the rest of the national economy.

243. On the other side, the case of Western Europe illustrates well the rationale behind the dynamism of intraregional trade. In Europe, this trade is composed largely, and increasingly, of intra-industry rather than inter-industry exchanges. The explanation may well be that, as the extent of the market increases, economies of scale and of coordination allow the intermediate parts and processes required in the production of manufactured goods to be separated and entrusted to specialized producers. This dynamic division of labour could in principle be extended on a global basis, given the steep decline in coordination costs, but, in practice, it is likely to proceed more rapidly among countries with similar industrial structures, and geographically sufficiently close, to minimize the risks of disruption to their supplies of intermediate inputs. Therefore both geographical and economic distances matter. Subregional arrangements also contribute to reducing transaction costs as well as political risks. The success of EU and the arguments developed above help to explain the renewed dynamism of subregional integration in Latin America and in Asia. The question then arises whether or not regionalization is an obstacle to globalization.

244. There is considerable controversy in the literature whether the welfare gains from subregional arrangements are smaller or greater than those resulting from liberalization on a multilateral basis (most-favoured nation (MFN)) and whether they will

ultimately reinforce or undermine the multilateral trading system as embodied in the rules of the World Trade Organization. Estimates of whether such subregional arrangements lead to more intense trade with the rest of the world or to intra-bloc bias are inconclusive and sensitive to specification of models that embody a priori ideological assumptions. In the papers presented by the Executive Secretaries, it is interesting to note that, despite the unequal results of subregional arrangements and the adherence to World Trade Organization principles, all consider that official subregional arrangements are favourable to development, as they enlarge markets and expose enterprises to competition and therefore prepare countries to benefit from globalization. The most sophisticated presentation of this approach comes from Latin America which invented the expression of "open regionalism". This concept launched by ECLAC in 1994 is used to describe the trend that already existed at the end of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, when the dynamism of subregional movements was combined with unilateral liberalization and the movement towards hemispheric integration. Open regionalism is defined as interdependency between preferential agreements and "de facto" integration in response to market signals, resulting from a broad and generalized liberalization. As conceptualized by ECLAC, and as observed in practice, globalization and regionalism go hand in hand and are mutually reinforcing.

245. In conclusion, regionalism is the alpha and the omega of globalization: the liberalization that is at the heart of globalization leads to more intraregional trade and capital movement. Regionalism is perceived as a step towards preparing countries and enterprises to face the challenges and risks of globalization. Regionalism is also an alternative for countries that perceive unfairness and asymmetries in the globalization programme promoted by the more advanced developed countries.

Globalization and development

246. On globalization and development, the five Executive Secretaries agree on the technological and institutional evolutions that underpin globalization. There are nuances in their analysis as to what is actually new or not, ECE underscoring that at the end of the nineteenth century the invention of the telegraph together with the development of rail transports introduced changes in business operation that were as dramatic, if not more so, than the development of the Net. They are unanimous, however, in underlining the asymmetries in globalization and the risks this poses for development.

247. Globalization is a process facilitated by information technology and characterized by increasing shares of external trade in GDP and growing freedom of capital movements; but it can also be seen as a political programme promoted by the Governments of North America and Western Europe and by large multinational companies that, by giving as full a reign as possible to market forces and reducing the role of the State to a minimum, is expected to lead to faster growth for the world economy and also to increasing convergence of national incomes per head across the world. Seen as such, the globalization agenda turns out to be the traditional new liberal agenda updated for a world where geographical distance is alleged to have little significance for business. The dynamic of intra-European and North American trade shows, however, that in fact geography still matters.

248. The Governments of many developing countries, or countries with economies in transition, are ready to adhere to such a programme, but it becomes unacceptable to them as soon as they realize that liberalization over the last decade has tended to be one-sided and that, more and more, World Trade Organization regulations would prevent them from developing active policies to increase the competitiveness of their economies.

249. The Uruguay Round agreements[25] have indeed increased the transparency of national trade rules and have extended the scope of multilateral rules and disciplines. However, despite the efforts made by the developing countries, the outcome of the negotiations were extremely unbalanced in terms of the distribution of the costs and benefits. The concerns of the majority of countries with economies in transition were ignored as they were not members of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), but on many points they are similar to those of the developing countries. The Governments of those two country groups demand that tariff barriers to products in which they have comparative advantages should be reduced and that they should not be prevented from increasing their export capacity by importing countries using diverse types of trade restrictions and discriminatory measures

such as anti-dumping provisions and new modalities of voluntary export restraints. Finally, those Governments require that they not be banned from using policy tools for restructuring their economies and building new comparative advantages. Africa is particularly concerned by the insistence of EU on the renewal of the special safeguard provisions under the Agreement on Agriculture which it judges to operate against its development interests.

250. The succession of financial crises has led to a better recognition of the importance of financial regulation and the strict enforcement of prudential rules; it has also led to a better assessment of the risks of liberalizing short-term capital movements in countries that have not yet fully developed financial institutions and mechanisms and where the mobility of short-term capital can lead to excessively strict macroeconomic policies to the detriment of growth and restructuring. It has led also to discussions on the reform of the international financial architecture, in which the regional dimension would need to be taken into account.

Other issues and proposals for consideration by the Council

251. The Executive Secretaries also discussed the relationship between the regional commissions and the Economic and Social Council and considered ways to strengthen their contributions to the Council's policy review. In that connection, they expressed their genuine satisfaction with the modalities recently put in place for interlinking the activities of the commissions with other United Nations entities at the global level and with the United Nations system at the regional level, in line with the guidance provided by the Council in its resolution 1998/46, annex III, in respect of the dual role of the commissions.

252. At the global intergovernmental level, however, the Executive Secretaries felt that there was additional scope for substantive interaction between the regional commissions and the Economic and Social Council. In the view of the Executive Secretaries, this could be accomplished by:

- Making the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation more focused on policy issues as they arise at the regional level, including intergovernmental perspectives of the commissions on these and related issues. Instead of covering the recurrent activities, the report would concentrate primarily on new developments and significant initiatives, undertaken by the respective commissions. In addition, the report would continue to highlight in an analytical manner the response of the commissions to the global mandates, such as, the follow-up to the global conferences and other major issues of which the United Nations is seized. At the same time, the report would continue to update the Economic and Social Council on developments in interregional cooperation as well as on progress made in inter-agency cooperation at the regional level in response to regional priorities. The Council's attention would also be drawn to any significant initiatives undertaken with their respective regional partners;
- Providing the summaries of the regional economic and social surveys prepared by the commissions so that they might bear on the debate on the global economic situation, at the beginning of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.II.C.1.

[2] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.II.F.10.

[3] General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4.

[5] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[6] See *Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 3-14 September 1990* (A/CONF.147/18), part one.

[7] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.II.E.3.

[8] Ibid., chap. I.

[9] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 19* (E/1999/39), chap. IV.

[10] Ibid., *Supplement No. 21* (E/1999/41), chap. I.

[11] Ibid., decision 220 (XX), annex.

[12] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[13] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[14] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.E.24.

[15] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[16] See "Third African Population Conference", in *Population Bulletin of the United Nations, 1994*, Nos. 37/38 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XIII.16), pp. 37-46.

[17] See United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

[18] A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I.

[19] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

[20] General Assembly resolution S-21/2, annex.

[21] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[22] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 17* (E/1996/37), chap. III, sect. F.

[23] Ibid., *1998, Supplement No. 21* (E/1998/41), chap. III, sect. G, resolution 565 (XXVII).

[24] Report of the Task Force of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, entitled "Towards a new international financial architecture", 21 January 1999.

[25] See *Legal Instruments Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994* (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994-7).